FACILITATING SPIRITUAL FORMATION
THROUGH THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE IN HEBREW
AT FRONTIER BAPTIST CHURCH IN FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

A THESIS-PROJECT

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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To all the brothers and sisters at our fourteen churches worldwide,

Originating from Berkland Baptist Church in 1981,

To my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Living Word,

And to God to whom be all the glory forever and ever!

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ABSTRACT

The role of Scripture is central to spiritual formation. Furthermore, the advantages of reading the Bible in the original languages are often discussed. The objective of this thesis-project is to combine the two themes and apply them to the congregation at large instead of just the pastoral staff. Using the ingenious method of teaching Hebrew that was developed by Rev. Sun Ki Kim, 15 Hebrew Bible studies were taught to 23 participants in the course of the project, and surveys were conducted to ascertain their progress. The results showed that teaching the Bible in Hebrew facilitated the spiritual formation of the participants to a certain extent. Recommendations were made to enhance spiritual formation.

CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING: FACILITATING SPIRITUAL FORMATION THROUGH THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE IN HEBREW?

For every Christian, the importance of Scripture in his or her spiritual formation cannot be overstated. M. Robert Mulholland writes: "It is the picture of human encounter with the action of the presence, purpose, and power of God in the midst of human situations. As such, scripture provides insight into the ways in which the Word penetrates human lives and situations, discerns/reveals the truth of the human condition, and transforms the flawed words human beings have become into the word God speaks them forth to be in the world."[1] David Mathis also writes in *Habits of Grace* that "it is a gift that we would have the desire for and take action to avail ourselves of the means of God's grace"[2] and that "the most basic principle of grace"[3] is "the immersing of our lives in his word."[4] This important role that Scripture occupies in spiritual formation is nowhere better described than in David Currie's article "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation." In it, he writes: "*Sola Scriptura* affirms a priority, indeed even more, a primacy, of the word as the foundation of spiritual formation resulting in believers becoming increasingly conformed to the image of God."[5]

For this reason, it was Wycliffe who said that Scripture is the possession of the church.[6] For Wycliffe, by church, he meant every Christian. This is the reason that he began translating

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[1] M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2000), 42.
[2] David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Growing in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 37.
[3] Mathis, 37.
[4] Mathis, 37.
[5] David Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon Isaac and Eckhard Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 51.
[6] Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1* (New York: Harper One, 2010), 74% (Kindle).

the Bible from Latin into English so that every English Christian could read the Bible in his or her own language.[7] This watershed moment was followed later by the Reformation with its tenets of *Solar Scriptura* and *Presbyterii Fidelium*, which more broadly brought the Bible into the common languages of believers, exemplified by Luther's translation of the Bible from Hebrew and Greek to German.

But Scripture was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. As I learned in Systematic Theology I at Gordon-Conwell many years ago, the inspiration of Scripture in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 refers to Scripture in the original languages. This is the reason that Gordon-Conwell as well as other evangelical seminaries spend an inordinate amount of time and energy teaching the students Hebrew and Greek. But the tacit assumption is that the training in the original languages is not for every believer – that it is targeted for pastors and other preachers and the teachers of the Bible. John Piper, for example, talked about a book of daily Scripture readings in Hebrew and Greek called *Light on the Path.*[8] The one who edited it was a banker named Heinrich Bitzer. Piper then issued the following challenge to pastors and ministers: "A banker! Brothers, must we be admonished by the sheep as to what our responsibility is as shepherds?"[9] Does this not create another dichotomy between clergy and laity, the very thing that was addressed by the Reformation? And in so doing, is not the spiritual formation of the congregants being limited since the word of God is an integral part of spiritual formation?

[7] Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: Volume 1* (New York: Harper One, 2010), 74% (Kindle).
[8] John Piper, "Brothers, we are not professionals," in *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* by Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), xvii.
[9] Piper, xvii.

Rev. Sun Ki Kim, our church's[10] mentor who passed away almost two years ago, gave the following illustration.[11] He said that if one were to do a Ph.D. in Shakespearean study, does it make sense for that person to use a translation of Shakespeare's works instead of studying it in the original language of English? He added that since the Bible is central for the spiritual formation of every believer, it only makes sense for every Christian to be able to read the Bible in the original languages. Rev. Kim, whose ministry context was South Korea, had a bold vision that every Christian in South Korea would one day be able to read the Bible in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek.[12] In the next chapter, it will be shown more concretely the benefits that reading the Old Testament in Hebrew yields that go beyond reading the same texts in translation.

The fact of the matter, however, is that the original languages are not easy to learn and even harder to retain. Many pastors including this author even forget the Hebrew alphabet as the years pass. If this is the reality, is it not too much to expect every Christian to be able to read the Bible in the original languages? This was the impasse that aforementioned Rev. Kim experienced as a life-long teacher of the original languages. His testimony was that after teaching some 1000 seminars in which he used traditional method of teaching Hebrew and Greek – one based on memorization - he began to despair because the people whom he had been teaching were not retaining what they were learning. But in his despair, a light broke through.[13] By the grace of God, through the use of the Bible softwares, he was able to find a solution to this impasse[14].

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[10] A network of churches, which were formerly known as Berkland Baptist Church, founded by Rev. Dr. Paul Kim and his wife Dr. Rebekah Kim.

[11] This is from the seminar that he gave in Korea in 2010.

[12] Sun Ki Kim, *Petra Mastering Hebrew in 3 Days* (Seoul: Do-Suh Petra, 2010), 1. This book was written in Korean, and it was translated into English by Jinyoung Seo.

[13] This testimony was from one of the seminars that I attended in Korea in 2010.

[14] Sun Ki Kim, *Petra Mastering Hebrew in 3 days*, 2.

What makes the original languages hard to retain over time is the sheer amount of memorization that they entail, especially with the vocabulary. The availability of the Bible softwares as well as the websites such as http://www.biblehub.com/ make memorization somewhat superfluous. This would truly be a beneficial use of today's technology, which so often is being abused to the detriment of so many believers. More than that, I consider this modern advantage the grace of God because we are standing on the shoulders of those who went before us, who have already done the hard work of parsing every word of the Old Testament. This labor of love can be likened to a path that is made by the person who went ahead of us by plowing through a couple feet of snow so that we do not have to do the pioneering work of plowing through the snow again. Grammatical concepts nonetheless have to be learned and retained. But even with regard to grammar, Rev. Kim made much headway, as he was able to teach it in a simple, clear and fun way because of the experience and insight that he was able to glean over the years. As a result, he wrote a book in 2010 that was titled, *Petra Mastering Hebrew in 3 Days.* He also wrote a similar book on mastering Greek in 3 days.[15] Petra is the name of the organization that Rev. Kim established to promote the study of the Bible in the original languages. Needless to say, these books were a crowning accomplishment of his labor of love over the years. For this thesis project, I will limit the scope of teaching to Hebrew only, and his methodology will be the basis of teaching the Hebrew language, which is an important aspect of this thesis project. No prior knowledge of Hebrew among the participants is required although having some knowledge of the language obviously will be helpful.

The question is, will this work? It is the objective of this thesis-project to test this premise among the brothers and sisters of our mission church in Fairbanks, Alaska – Frontier Baptist

[15] Sun Ki Kim, *Petra Mastering Greek in 3 Days* (Seoul: Doh Seo Petra, 2010).

Church. In the beginning and throughout as needed, Hebrew will be taught. It is my hope that the participants will reach a certain level of Hebrew proficiency so that they will be able to digest the teaching of the Old Testament in Hebrew because learning the language is just a means to being able to see the words of the Bible in the original language. The goal is to bring about the spiritual formation of these brothers and sisters, most of whom are not currently pastors and regular preachers.

After I graduated with M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell in 1992, I myself did not engage in Hebrew for many years to the point that I could not completely remember the Hebrew alphabet. My interest in Hebrew became rekindled, however, in 2003 when I began to review the basics of the Hebrew language. Then in 2010, I was admitted to the Ph.D. program of the Near Eastern Studies department of The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, where I specialized in the Hebrew Bible. Thankfully, I met Rev. Kim shortly before that time through the arrangement of my spiritual leader Dr. Rebekah, and although I ended up not finishing the Ph.D. program after some five years, by God's sovereignty, I had been trained in Hebrew sufficiently so as to be able to embark on this project through the encouragement of my church.

At this point, a qualifier must be inserted. The goal of this thesis-project is not to detract the participants from engaging with the Bible in their own languages. It was Wycliffe, Luther and others who brought the Bible into the languages of the people, instead of leaving it in the hands of the clergy or the learned only. In addition, as a missionary, I could not agree with more with Lamin Sanneh on the importance of translation of the message of the Gospel for missions. It is a way of leveling the playing field in regard to cultures. He writes: "As an open process Bible translation inveighs against the forces of cultural chauvinism by interposing the barrier of Gentile inclusion. It confronts culture with the principle of culture's penultimate and relative

merit: other cultures count equally before God. Translatability gives pluralism a concrete indigenous expression."[16] The progress that was made in church history through the Bible translation by the sacrificial labor of love by the Reformers and unsung missionaries worldwide cannot be understated. By facilitating spiritual formation through the original languages, the goal of this thesis-project is, therefore, exactly the opposite – that is, engagement with the original languages should cause the participants to fall in love with the word of God so that they will engage with the Bible in their own languages more than ever before because the goal is not to increase in head knowledge but to grow spiritually.

Frontier Baptist Church (FBC) is a mission church[17] that was inaugurated in 2016. Located in one of the coldest and northern-most cities in the US, FBC was established in order to make disciples among the Alaskan Natives. The mission work among the Alaskan Natives has not been an easy one, however, because of their broken lives. If the suicide rate is an indication of the extent of their brokenness, it is almost triple the national average. According to the figures released by Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics in 2014, there were 22.3 suicides for every 100,000 people in Alaska and 35.1 suicides for every 100,000 Alaska Natives.[18] The national rate is 12.6 per 100,000.[19] The mission work among the Alaska Natives will require much endurance and spiritual fortitude. This is the reason that facilitating the spiritual formation among the missionaries is such an important task. In recent years, FBC also became home to The Rivendell Academy (TRA), a homeschooling endeavor among our churches. There are 23 participants who have volunteered to be part of this project. Out of the 23, three are high school seniors in TRA,

[16] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2009), 82.
[17] FBC is a mission church among the network of churches, which were formerly known as Berkland Baptist Church, founded by Rev. Dr. Paul Kim and his wife Dr. Rebekah Kim.
[18] Rebekah Kim, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska" (D. Min. thesis-project at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2018), 7.
[19] Rebekah Kim, 7.

all of whom are 18 years old. Of the rest, only one is an ordained pastor, two are the wives of ordained pastors, two are lay pastors and two are their wives. The ages range from 18 to 58.

Initial Questionnaire

An initial survey was conducted to get an overview of where the participants were in terms of their Hebrew language proficiency and their level of personal engagement with the word of God. For the initial survey, there were four questions in the questionnaire, and the participants were asked to not put down their names. This survey was given on January 20, 2023, via email and each person was given two to three days to reply. Everyone responded. The first two questions were quantitative in nature, as the first question pertained to the proficiency in Hebrew. The second question had to do with whether the person owned a Bible software or not. The third and fourth questions were qualitative, as the third one pertained to the role of Scripture in one's life in the present and how he or she thought Scripture is shaping his or her life. The fourth one addressed the expectation of each person who agreed to participate.

The first question regarding the proficiency in Hebrew used the scale from 1 to 5. The meaning of the scale is as follows: 1 = not know the alphabet; 2 = know the alphabet and some grammar; 3 = very familiar with grammar including some knowledge of the verbal system; 4 = proficient in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary; 5 = able to sight read. Out of the 23, only one answered "1", which meant that he or she did not know the alphabet. 18 out of the 23 answered "2," which indicated the knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and some grammar. One person answered "between 2 and 3" and three people answered "3," which meant that they were very familiar with the Hebrew grammar and had some knowledge of the verbal system. It is clear that almost all have some background in Hebrew since they at least know the alphabet and

some grammar. How is this possible when most of the participants did not go to seminary? This is because more than ten years ago, our church established *Bereshith-Amen Scripture Institute (BSI)* through which conferences were held where Greek and Hebrew as well as the word of God was taught in the original languages by Rev. Kim. These conferences continued until about 10 years ago.[20] There was one more conference after that, but by then, Rev. Kim could no longer do it because of his health.

The second question dealt with whether the participant owned a Bible software or not. Only 5 of the 23 had Bible had softwares. Since the thesis project will presuppose that everyone will have some kind of interlinear capability with parsing, this could have been a problem, but thankfully, there are public domain websites such as http://www.biblehub.com/, which provide interlinear capability with parsing for Hebrew. As I mentioned before, thank God for today's technology, which is being used for God's glory through this thesis project.

The third question read, "Please describe your engagement with Scripture. How important is the role of Scripture in your life currently, and how do you sense Scripture is shaping your spiritual life?" Out of the 23, 14 answered that Scripture is "very important, pivotal, vital or essential" in their walk with God. The reasons given included - to walk daily with God; to deepen relationship with Him and to grow as a child of God; to survive and to fight against sin; to rethink one's value system and worldview according to Scripture; to live a holy and righteous life; to know who God is; to transform one's life; to make sure that one is walking in the right path; to have a wake-up call to repent and to have assurance of something that one is uncertain about; and to have spiritual food, which is the lamp to our feet. One of the 14 said that when he or she is not deeply in the word of God, the relationship with God suffers and that

[20] Thankfully the BSI Conferences resumed at the beginning of this year under the teaching of Dr. Rebekah Kim.

through the word of God, he or she is reminded of who he or she is and how much God loves him or her. Three said that Scripture is "important" because without meditating on the word of God, one will live out his or her old self; for spiritual guidance and truth; and for daily walk with God and to know Him and oneself better.

Out of the 23, six did not use adjectives like "very important" or "pivotal," but nonetheless, they were actively engaged in the word of God daily in order to experience growth in the relationship with God, to see oneself more and discern God's will in the day-to-day life and in the lives of others, and to go before the cross so that one can repent, commit and obey. Three of the six shared more of their current struggles. One of them said that he or she sometimes engages in the Bible reading as a duty so that the word of God is not a lamp unto his or her feet, and another said that he or she cannot often see the immediate effect from the engagement with the word of God but that over time, it becomes relevant and that without the word of God, he or she cannot see oneself and repent. The third person talked about the importance of the word of God in helping him or her deny oneself in the daily difficulties of life together.

Overall, it was shown through the third question of the questionnaire that the 23 participants in this thesis project take the word of God seriously despite their share of struggles and difficulties, to the point that many of them have mentioned regarding their daily engagement with the word of God. I can give two reasons for this. First, most of the 23 participants are committed members of our church, which from the beginning of its history placed the ministry of the word of God at the forefront.[21] The soil of their hearts have been cultivated over time through the ministry of our church. I believe that this is the importance of church. And second, the 23

[21] Pastor Paul Kim and his wife Dr. Rebekah founded Berkland Baptist Church in 1981.

participants are part of our mission church, which implies that most of them are missionaries. It is not surprising then that they are committed to learning about the word of God since they are committed to God.

The fourth question had to do with the expectation of the participants from their participation in this thesis project. Out of the 23 participants, eleven said that they expect to go deeper into the word of God through the original languages. Their goals are to understand God's heart more; to be more equipped to fight the spiritual battles as well as one's sins and to fight for others; to experience freedom; to meditate on the word of God more slowly; to be able to read the OT in Hebrew; to be able to do daily devotions in Hebrew; and to know God and self better and to strengthen faith. Four of the 23 participants talked about improving in Hebrew so that one can understand the nuances of the OT to understand who God is; so that one can memorize the OT verses in Hebrew; and so that by looking at the Hebrew text, one can come out of comfort zone more. One person mentioned wanting to fall in love with the word of God and to be engaged with the word of God more actively. Another person said that he or she wanted to more accurately know the word of God in order to understand God's heart and will better. One person wanted to discover more gems in God's word for oneself by having a more solid foundation in Hebrew in order to know the depth of God's heart more. Another person said that he or she wanted to check out some words from the original text periodically as needed. One person wanted to bridge the gap between the OT and the real life. One person even misunderstood the question slightly and said that he or she wished that the thesis project will fulfill the goal of facilitating the spiritual formation of the participants.

Facilitating Spiritual Formation – Desire and Habits

Thomas à Kempis in his classic *The Imitation of Christ* starts out "'He who follows Me doesn't walk in darkness.' These words tell us to imitate Christ in life and behavior. This is the way we find light and avoid darkness. Now we have our assignment: Meditate on Jesus."[22] In other words, the goal of spiritual formation is to become like Christ. On the one hand, the process of spiritual formation depends on the grace of God. As David Mathis says, "The grace of God is gloriously beyond our skill and technique."[23] But the means of this grace in spiritual formation is through the practices that enable us to receive this grace.[24] And, of course, one of these practices is engagement with the word of God through Scripture.

I am grateful that the expectations of the participants for the most part fall in line with one of the objectives of this thesis project – to grow deeper in their engagement with the word of God. *Growing deeper* in the word of God nonetheless sounds a little too vague and abstract. To render it more concrete, I want to suggest a more workable definition of *growing in desire and changing in habits* with regard to the word of God. David Mathis writes: "And it is God's grace that enables us to make choices and expend effort to seek more of God (1 Cor. 15:10). It is a gift that we would have desire for and take action to avail ourselves of the means of God's grace…"[25] I have more than one occasion discussed with my peers regarding some sheep's lack of desire for the word of God and for spiritual matters. We used to say that it is tougher to kindle a desire than to extinguish one, meaning that it is more difficult to motivate a person who has little desire for spiritual things than to help a person who is over-zealous for spiritual things to calm down and be more self-controlled. James K. A. Smith says that "we need a

[22] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. and paraphrased Donald Demaray (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982)
[23] David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Growing in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 21.
[24] David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Growing in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 21.
[25] David Mathis, 21.

nonreductionistic understanding of human agents as instruments of desire or love."[26] He talks about our heart or gut as being the center of the gravity of our identity rather than the heady regions of the mind.[27] He writes: "This model of the person as desiring creature also contests the earlier models by articulating a more dynamic sense of human identity as both unfolding and developing over time (a process of formation), something characterized by a dynamic flow. The human person is the sort of creature who can never be captured in a snapshot; we need video in order to do justice to this dynamism."[28] As it says in Psalm 37:4, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (ESV)

James K. A. Smith also writes that the desire for the good life in Christ becomes concrete in our lives by "becoming an integral part of the fabric of our dispositions – our precognitive tendencies to act in certain ways toward certain ends."[29] Smith says philosophers such as Aristotle and Aquinas describe such dispositions as *habits.*[30] He writes: "Good habits, for instance, are 'virtues,' whereas bad habits are 'vices' These habits constitute a kind of "second nature": while they are learned (and thus not simply biological instincts), they can become so intricately woven into the fiber of our being that they function *as if* they were natural or biological. In addition to growing in desire, changing one's lifestyle to establish habits then is an important aspect of spiritual formation. When one typically thinks about habits, what usually comes to mind is bad habits. Those too did not take place overnight. They started with some wrong desires, and through practice, they became entrenched in one's life. In the same way, good

[26] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 44.
[27] James K. A. Smith, 44.
[28] James K. A. Smith, 44.
[29] James K. A. Smith, 51.
[30] James K. A. Smith, 51.

habits start with good desires and can become entrenched in one's life through practice. Growing in desire and changing in habits then are an integral part of spiritual formation.

There are a couple reasons that habits are slow and even stubborn to form. First, one's life may be too busy and too cluttered with too many activities. It is not in the scope of this thesis project to address this issue, except to say that we are called to me like Mary in Luke Chapter 10 instead of being like Martha, who was troubled about many things. The second reason may be that one is too weak in willpower to implement this change. As Jesus said in Matthew 26:41, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (ESV) How then can we be strengthened by the grace of God to follow through in action, what began as a godly desire, so that a godly habit is established that testifies to the work of God? James K. A. Smith writes: "Implicit in this is also something fundamental about the nature of humanity: human flourishing is dependent upon our being oriented to and defined by this *relationship.*"[31] By this relationship, he, of course, meant relationship with God in whose image human beings were created. But he goes onto say that our dependence also extends to one another in the body of Christ: "It is not only sin that makes us dependent upon others; our very finitude, as creatures, impels us to relationality because we need the gifts, talents, and resources of others. And such dependence is part of the very fiber of God's good creation."[32] In other words, even though the Christian is at times too weak on his or her own to follow through and establish a godly habit, by depending on others, he or she may be strengthened to accomplish what he or she was not able to on one's own. This is the power of church, and more specifically, the web of relationships within church. This is not independent from God as God's grace basically flows through the instrumentality of others in the body of Christ. This is indeed part of God's *oikonomia,* as Apostle Paul describes in Ephesians Chapter 3.

[31] James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 154.
[32] James K. A. Smith, 155.

Dr. Rebekah Kim, my spiritual leader, wrote her D. Min. thesis project at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary titled, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska."[33] In it, she talked about four different kinds of relationships in a person's life within the body of Christ.[34] The first type of relationship is with one's spiritual leaders. The second is with one's spiritual peers, and the third is with one's spouse. The fourth is with one's sheep. And at the center of Koinonia Cross is the relationship between indwelling Christ and oneself. It is the abundance of these Christ-centered relationships within the body of Christ that encourage, challenge, spur and even rebuke us so that we can get out of our spiritual blindness, comfort zone and inertia to move toward Christ-likeness. This includes having the accountability to be encouraged, reminded and steered to follow up on our godly desires until they become ingrained as godly habits in our lives. I will talk more about Koinonia Cross in Chapters 2 and 4.

Word, Prayer and Witnessing (WPW)

In addition to growing deeper in the word of God, the importance of prayer in spiritual formation is generally agreed. Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* writes about prayer as "the chief exercise of faith"[35] and "the way we receive the grace of Christ."[36] He devoted more than 70 pages to prayer in his *Institutes*[37], which emphasized and highlighted the

[33] Rebekah Kim, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska" (D. Min. thesis-project at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2018).
[34] Rebekah Kim, 31.
[35] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed. John T. McNeill and translated Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 850.
[36] John Calvin, 851.
[37] John Calvin, 850 – 920.

importance of prayer and which pointed to the fact that Calvin was a man of prayer, which biographies such as McGrath's biography missed.[38] Calvin poignantly writes:[39]

> But after we have been instructed by faith to recognize that whatever we need and whatever we lack is in God, and in our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the Father willed all the fullness of his bounty to abide [cf. Col 1:19; John 1:16] so that we may all draw from it as from an overflowing spring, it remains for us to seek in him. Otherwise, to know God as the master and bestower of all good things, who invites us to request them of him, and still not go to him and not ask of him – this would be of as little profit as for a man to neglect a treasure, buried and hidden in the earth, after it had been pointed out to him.

He talked about having a devout detachment from carnal cares and thoughts in order to converse with God,[40]and he warned against prayer being perfunctory because prayer should be earnest – even burning.[41] Calvin wrote about many other aspects of prayer, which cannot be mentioned because of the lack of space. One more thing that I do want to mention though is that according to Calvin, the plea for forgiveness of sins or repentance is "the most important part of prayer."[42] I could not agree with Calvin more. Spiritual formation is about transformation into the image of Christ. There are many reasons that Christians may be prevented from growing in Christ and changing, but I believe that the fundamental problem is sin or sins, so repentance – even daily repentance – is quite important.

Facilitating spiritual formation through the teaching of the Bible in Hebrew hopefully then should not only motivate the participants to go deeper in the word of God but also steer them to seek God more earnestly through prayer. The two are related. Engagement with the word of God is necessary to guide the Christian to pray intelligently, and prayer is necessary to digest the word of God. This is why the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and

[38] Alister McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
[39] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* 850.
[40] John Calvin, 853.
[41] John Calvin, 856.
[42] John Calvin, 860.

the prayers along with the fellowship and the breaking of bread (Acts 2:42). Just as eating balanced meals is essential to one's health, the word of God and prayer are essential to spiritual formation, as described by many authors on this subject, such as David Mathis.[43]

In her teaching from Romans Chapter 7, Dr. Rebekah Kim explained that in order for the Christian to overcome the gravity of sin – the flesh – one needs the spiritual fuel of word, prayer and witnessing (WPW) to come into the spiritual orbit – being led by the Spirit - just as a rocket needs fuel to overcome the earth's atmosphere to enter the earth's orbit.[44] In other words, along with word and prayer, she introduced witnessing as a necessary practice in spiritual formation. In many of the well-known books pertaining to spiritual formation, however, witnessing is not mentioned. Richard Foster's *Celebration of Disciplines*, for example, does not include witnessing.[45] David Mathis' *Habits of Grace* does not mention witnessing. Eugene Peterson, in his book *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ*, which is an exposition on the book of Ephesians, writes: "This is a conversation on becoming a mature Christian, Christian formation, growing up to the stature of Christ."[46] Yet throughout the book, he does not talk about personal witnessing. Only once does he mention the witness and representation of the church of God's presence in this world.[47] Even when an author mentions evangelism and spiritual formation together, they are said to be related fields instead of evangelism being a necessary part of spiritual formation.[48] Perhaps the reason for this omission has to do with the fact that spiritual formation is described more in terms of inner practices rather than outer

[43] David Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Growing in Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016),
[44] At a conference of our network of churches that was held in 2014. More will be described in the next chapter.
[45] Richard Foster, *Celebration of Disciplines* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2018).
[46] Eugene Peterson, *Practice Resurrection: A Conversation on Growing Up in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1.
[47] Eugene Peterson, 255.
[48] Mark Teasdale, "*Evangelism and Spiritual Formation.*" From a websitehttps://journals.sfu.ca from Simon Fraser University.

practices. But I am not sure that spiritual formation can be so neatly defined as it involves the work of the Spirit in our daily lives that draws us closer to Christ.

As mentioned before, the goal of spiritual formation is to be like Christ. Robert Coleman says in his *The Master's Way of Personal Evangelism* that "Jesus is the Evangel incarnate – the Gospel alive."[49] He writes: "Perishing humans who come to Jesus and feel His saving grip are no longer their own. We belong to Him who holds us by His grace. And in His ownership, we participate in His mission. Evangelism thus becomes a natural expression of the church…Not to leave the issue in doubt, Jesus told His disciples that as the Father sent Him into the world, so He sends us (John 17:18; 20:21). All who believe in Him now are called to His work (John 14:12). There are no exceptions."[50] In addition, the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 relate the work of the Spirit to witnessing: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (ESV) Ben Johnson's quote with which this chapter began described spiritual formation as a work of the Spirit that leads to maturity in Christ. And since personal witnessing is an important part of our Christian life that is also a work of the Spirit, it will not be far-fetched to conclude that witnessing is a practice that should not be left out in spiritual formation. This is confirmed in real life when we strive to live as Jesus' witnesses. Often we feel inadequate, which causes us to go back to the word of God and prayer in deeper desperation. When we have the privilege of leading a person to Christ, there is joy that hardly anything else can compare with as we give thanks to God for being used as His instruments of the Gospel. Is this not spiritual formation?

[49] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master's Way of Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton: Crossways Book, 1997), 10.
[50] Robert E. Coleman, 11.

Summary

According to Isaiah 55:11, the word of God has power to change lives since it will not return to God without bearing fruit. The word of God in the original languages should have even greater power to change lives. I am reminded of what Admiral Yi Sun Shin did during the Joseon dynasty in the 16th century when Japan invaded Korea. In terms of manpower and weapons, Korea was against all odds. But amazingly, Admiral Yi and the Korean navy were victorious in all 23 battles that they fought at sea. Along with his wisdom and determination, what was instrumental was the building of the turtle ship, which was quite revolutionary at that time because of its advancement in metallurgy as the surface of the deck was covered with metal so that the foreign soldiers could not come aboard easily. This was at a time when ships were made of mostly wood. My hope is that the teaching of the Bible in Hebrew will serve as a type of turtle ship in spiritual formation – not only motivating the participants to seek God more through the word of God, prayer and witnessing, but also to change their habits so that they will become more Christ-like to the glory of God. This is illustrated in Figure 1. The verses in each category of WPW were given by Dr. Rebekah. Change, of course, takes time, so this thesis project will serve as a glimpse into the hopeful potential of the role that teaching of the Bible in the original languages will play in spiritual formation.

	Desire	Habits
Word of God (Psalm 1:2)	----->	----->
Prayer (1 Thess. 5:17)	----->	----->
Witnessing (2 Tim 4:2)	----->	----->

Figure 1

Conclusion

Although the role of the word of God is emphasized for spiritual formation in the evangelical churches, the role of the word of God in the original languages has been watered down in two ways – first, the teaching methodology for the original languages has been based on a kind of brute-force methodology that has not standing on the shoulders of the labors of God's people who went before us, not resulting in much fruit; and second, it has been more or less limited to clergy. My hypothesis is that the role of the word of God in the original languages may be expanded to the glory of God by making use of all the labors of love that were invested in Bible softwares and online study tools that are available today, and that furthermore, learning the Bible in the original languages may be for every Christian to be engaged in.

My project will be to teach a group of the brothers and sisters of our mission church in Fairbanks a series of 15 Bible studies from the Old Testament in Hebrew. Most of the participants are not pastors or pastors' wives. Along with an improvement in Hebrew proficiency, my hope is that these Bible studies in Hebrew will motivate them to grow in their desires for Word, Prayer and Witness (WPW). My prayer is that this will additionally lead them to have concrete changes in their habits regarding WPW. WPW will be used as a description of spiritual formation. In particular, the participants will take part in 3 surveys – at the beginning, in the middle and at the end - to indicate their growing desires and habits regarding WPW. Some will be asked to write brief testimonies to give a better picture of the role of learning the Old Testament in Hebrew in facilitating their spiritual formation.

Chapter 2 will provide a Biblical and theological foundation for this thesis project, and chapter 3 will survey the existing literature regarding this topic. Chapter 4 will explain the project in detail and analyze the data from the three surveys as well as to include the testimonies

of some participants. This chapter will also include some samples from the 15 Bible studies that will be given. Chapter 5 will be the final summary and conclusions for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Power of the Word of God in the Original Languages

Catherine McDowell of Gordon-Conwell writes that "reading the Bible in its original languages unlocks its dimension, beauty and complexity in ways simply inaccessible in translation."[1]This is nowhere better seen than in Psalm 119, which is a Psalm that is dedicated to the power of the word of God. This Psalm is a well-known acrostic Psalm as each stanza is composed of eight verses that begin with the same letter of the alphabet. All eight verses of the first stanza, for example, begin with the letter *aleph,* and all eight verses of the second stanza begin with the letter *bet,* and so on until all eight verses of the last stanza begin with the letter *tav*. Robert Frost is known to have said that "poetry is what gets lost in translation,"[2] and this is certainly true of acrostic poems. In addition, eight different Hebrew words are used to describe the word of God as if each one represents a facet of a multi-faced diamond. Although English translations such as ESV also use 8 different words in translation as well, nonetheless, the richness and the precision of each word cannot be adequately translated. For brevity, only four of the eight words will be discussed here.

The word that is commonly translated as "law" is *tôrâ*. Just doing a quick look at the lexicon shows the breadth of the meaning of this word as it includes "direction, instruction," "instruction, decision," and "established, particular instruction, rule."[3] In other words, *tôrâ* is

[1] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip Towner, *The Rewards of Learning Greek and Hebrew* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2021), x.
[2] Emma Bowman, "All Things Considered" on NPR (https://www.npr.org/2018/04/15/602261007/-nprpoetry-literary-translator-aaron-coleman).
[3] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 1710-1711.

more than just *law*; it is intended to instruct, direct and help one to decide. The root of *tôrâ* is *yrh*, whose basic meaning in Qal stem is to "throw or shoot."[4] The imagery is that of shooting an arrow. Because of the sinful condition of our hearts, our arrows continually miss the target of pleasing God, but through the *tôrâ*, the noun form of *yrh* in Hiphil, the causative stem, God can cause our arrows to hit the target. This also applies to spiritual warfare. Through the *tôrâ*, God can train us to become polished arrows that can be aimed at the very heart of the enemy.[5] There is much more to the meaning of the word *tôrâ*, but suffice it to say, it is a word that can edify and equip those who grasp its rich nuances.

The word that is commonly translated as *word* is *dāḇār.* According to BDB[6], *dāḇār* is translated as "word, thing or affair."[7] At first glance it seems like "word" and "affair" are not related, but when we look at verses like Genesis 22:1 – *wayĕhî ʾaḥar haddĕḇārîm hāʾēlleh*, we cannot help but to think that all the affairs that Abraham had gone through since leaving his father's household and homeland in obedience to God's word were a fulfillment of what God has spoken and promised to Abraham. This is also true of Joseph in Genesis 39:7 – *wayĕhî ʾaḥar haddĕḇārîm hāʾēlleh*. Even though Joseph's life was a series of tragedies, God had been faithful to him through his word, so he could be the second in command at Potiphar's household. Even though both were about to go through harrowing trials – God tested Abraham in one, and Satan tempted Joseph through Potiphar's wife in the other – there was an underlying truth that God's word will always come true. The word *dāḇār* then has the nuance that it is "the fulfilled word."[8]

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[4] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 436.

[5] I first heard this implication of Torah from Dr. Rebekah Kim in her seminar in Boston many years ago.

[6] BDB is the abbreviation for Brown, Driver and Briggs – the three authors of *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* which is a standard Hebrew Lexicon.

[7] Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 182-183.

[8] I first heard about this meaning of *dāḇār* from Rev. Sun Ki Kim at his seminar in Korea in 2010.

Another fascinating word in Psalm 119 is *piqqūḏîm*, which is translated as *precepts* in ESV. *Precept* is a word whose meaning is ambiguous to begin with. The word *piqqūḏîm* is based on the Hebrew root *pqd.* According to the Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT), the meaning of the root *pqd* in Qal stem includes "to make a careful inspection, to look at or see something."[9] It also connotes a special visit such as when God visited His people during the famine in Ruth 1:6. It is the suggestion of this author, therefore, that *piqqūḏîm* connotes the word of God that is given to His people in specific circumstances. In Psalm 119:4, for example, it says, "You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently," (ESV) and in Psalm 119:15, "I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways." (ESV) The aforementioned meaning is certainly suitable in these contexts.

The last word that we want to look at from Psalm 119 is *ḥuqqîm*, which is translated as "statutes" in ESV. The range of meanings for the singular noun *ḥoq* in HALOT include "portion, term; prescribed task; appropriate portion; due; and allotted portion."[10] Upon closer examination, quite a few of the uses of this word *ḥoq* have to do with daily prescription or something that is given or done on a regular basis. The root *ḥqq* has the following range of meanings in various stems – "to carve, to inscribe, to decree, and to decide."[11] The root, therefore, implies something that is inscribed or decreed permanently, and synthesizing these nuances together, the word *ḥuqqîm* has to do with the word of God that is prescribed daily or regularly according to God's decree. In other words, these are our daily devotions, weekly Sunday sermons and the

[9] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 956.
[10] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, 346.
[11] Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, 347.

conferences that are held regularly, where the word of God is proclaimed according to God's plan.

Using just the four of the eight Hebrew words that appear in Psalm 119, the power of reading the Bible in the original languages could be demonstrated. It is no surprise then that George Mueller, who was well-known for his faith in his orphanage ministry in London studied the Bible much. He writes:[12] "I now studied much, about 12 hours a day, chiefly Hebrew…[and] committed portions of the Hebrew Old Testament to memory; and this I did with prayer, often falling on my knees…I looked up to the Lord even whilst turning over the leaves of my Hebrew dictionary." In addition, William Bradford, who led the Pilgrims of the plantation at Plymouth, also talked about his love for the Hebrew language in the latter years of his life[13]. The list can go on and on, yet perhaps it is a testament to the lukewarmness of today's churches that the original languages in which Scripture was written lies mostly dormant not only in the pulpit but also, as it goes without saying, in the pews. It is only by the grace of God that my church under the leadership of Dr. Rebekah Kim was able to come to know late Rev. Sun Ki Kim, who, like John the Baptist, was a voice crying out in the wilderness in an all-consuming endeavor to wake up today's churches so that they can turn to the word of God in the original languages.

Apart from the manifold unearthing of hidden treasure that one is able to experience through studying the Bible in the original languages, another facet of engaging the original languages is its precision, as it says in Psalm 19:8, "…the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eye." (ESV) A case in point is Genesis 1:2. The verb that appears in this verse is *hayětā(h)*. The root of *hayětā(h)* is *hyh.* Almost all the major versions of the Bible including NIV,

[12] George Mueller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Mueller* (London: J. Nisbet & Co, 1873), Kindle – 5%.
[13] William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantations* (Plymouth: Plimoth Patuxet Press, 2020), 4.

ESV, ASV and King James opted for the meaning "to be" for *hyh.* But that is not the only option. Under the entry for *hyh,* BDB gives another meaning – "to become."[14] It is one thing to say that the earth *was*; it is radically different to say that the earth *became.* In the former, the fact that the earth was *tōhû and ḇōhû* was part of God's intention in creation; in the latter, however, the fact that the earth became *tōhû and ḇōhû* was far from God's original intention in creation. This is because *tōhû and ḇōhû* means more than just "without form and void" as ESV renders it. HALOT defines the words as "wilderness, wasteland and emptiness." The usage of the combination of these words is found exactly in only one place in the Old Testament, namely Jeremiah 4:23, and in a different construction in Isaiah 34:11. In the context, Jeremiah is in anguish because of the impending Babylonian invasion, as he says in 4:20, "Crash follows hard on crash; the whole land is laid waste," (ESV) and again in 4:26, "I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a desert, and all its cities were laid in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger." (ESV) What is interesting is that on the one hand, the commentaries like Keil and Delitsch's commentary and Huey's commentary wrote about the devastation brought about by the wrath of God. Keil and Delitsch write: "The fruitful field was the wilderness – not a wilderness, but 'changed into the wilderness with all its attributes.'"[15] Huey writes: "J. Bright calls this poem 'one of the most powerful descriptions of the Day of Yahweh in all prophetic literature.'…It is an unsettling reminder that sin and rebellion against God lead to darkness and chaos."[16] But on the other hand, even these scholars of the Old Testament could not seem to get beyond the translation of *tōhû and ḇōhû* that is given by the versions – "without form and void" -

[14] Francis Brown, *The Brown, Briggs,Driver Hebrew and English Lexicon: with an Appendix Containing Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996), 225.
[15] C. F. Keil and F. Delitsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 8, trans. David Patrick* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 116.
[16] F. B. Huey, Jr., *The New American Commentary, Vol. 16* (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 85.

so they inconsistently rendered them "without form and void," which denotes the primordial state of the earth rather than a condition that is a result of sin and rebellion against God. The usage of *tōhû and ḇōhû* in Isaiah 34:11 also connote destruction as a result of God's judgment on the nations.

In one of his seminars, Rev. Sun Ki Kim stated that *tōhû and ḇōhû* should be translated as "a heap of trash"[17] as an indication of the devastation and destruction that was described in Jeremiah 4:23. This, along with translation of the verb *hyh* as "to become," then brings a sobering and striking image of Genesis 1:2 that is quite contrary to the very nature of the Creator God, who is not a God of confusion but of goodness and peace according to 1 Corinthians 14:32, and by whom, everything that was created was good according to 1 Timothy 4:4. What then happened to the earth after its creation? The very condition of the earth points to God's adversary, whose attributes must be the very opposite of God's. And drawing upon other texts of the Bible such as Isaiah 14:12 – 21 and Jude verses 6 and 9, which testify concerning God's adversary Satan, a possible and even probable interpretation of Genesis 1:2 can be drawn – that is, the earth became "a heap of trash" because of the rebellion of God's adversary Satan, who turned the earth into a heap of trash. No wonder darkness and the deep, which are images of God's judgment, were over the earth right after its creation was mentioned in Genesis. In addition, verse 2 does not necessarily follow the usual verb-subject structure of the Hebrew sentence as if to draw attention to something unusual through the syntax. Gordon Wenham in his commentary on Genesis writes: "The syntactic relationship of v1 to v2 is problematic."[18] The first sin that ever took place in creation, therefore, was not Eve's disobedience in Genesis chapter

[17] I heard this from Rev. Kim in one of his seminars in Korea in 2010.
[18] Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 1, Genesis 1-15* (Waco: Word Books, 1987), 3.

3 but Satan's mutiny between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.[19] And the word of God has been extensively warning His children to not be outwitted by the wiles of Satan (2 Corinthians 2:11) from the pages of Genesis 1:2[20] because the life in Christ is a spiritual warfare, so every child of God should put on the whole armor of God according to Ephesians 6:10 – 18 and claim the victory that he or she has through the cross of Jesus.

This important interpretation of Genesis 1:2 that hinges on the translation of the Hebrew verb *hyh* intersects a theory of interpretation commonly referred to as the Gap Theory, or more specifically, what is called the Ruin-Restitution Hypothesis, a cousin of the Gap Theory. This theory was spurred on, in part, by Arminian theologians such as Episcopius and Limborch who spoke "about the chronological priority of the angels to human creation, in order for the devil to be devilish in time to tempt Eve in the Garden of Eden."[21] But the Ruin-Restitution Hypothesis was also an attempt to harmonize the Bible with the naturalists' theory of evolution because "it avoided aligning the content of the days of creation with geological events, yet proposed a more general harmony between geological history and Genesis by inserting that history between Gen 1:1 and 1:3."[22] In fact, it seems that people with all kinds of beliefs have jumped on the bandwagon trying to squeeze things into this "gap." This is why the Gap Theory differs from the interpretation that is given here, except for the one point of intersection. Fundamentally by translating the root *hyh* as "to become," what is described is not a "gap" in time, but rather Satan's mutiny in heaven, which had repercussions for the earth.

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[19] I heard this from Dr. Rebekah Kim many times in Bible studies and in my personal interaction with her.
[20] Rev. Kim said in one of his seminars that the reason that the Bible is long is in order to warn God's children of Satan's wiles and to be victorious.
[21] Andrew Brown, *The Days of Creation: A History of Christian Interpretation of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3* (Glandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2014), 195.
[22] Andrew Brown, 197.

Theology of the Word of God in the Original Languages

The year 2017 marked the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. It was one of the most significant markers in church history because "it was the battleground of definition and clarification for key doctrines of the Christian faith."[23] And not surprisingly, an important component of the Reformation was the role that the original languages played. As is well known, Martin Luther came to understand the dynamite power of the Gospel as he struggled and meditated on Romans 1:17 in Greek. Luther writes: "If the languages had not made me positive as to the true meaning of the Word, I might have still remained a chained monk, engaged in quietly preaching Romish errors in the obscurity of a cloister; the pope, the sophists, and their anti-Christian empire would have remained unshaken."[24] Since Luther is the one to whom the beginning of the Reformation is credited[25], it will not be too far-fetched to say that it was the work of the Spirit through the original languages that served as the springboard for the dawning of the Reformation.

Another theologian of the Reformation whose name was on par with Luther is John Calvin. He, too, was intensely trained in Greek and Hebrew.[26] Calvin, who was known for his powerful preaching, translated directly from Greek or Hebrew, and based on his previous study of the passage in Greek or Hebrew, preached extemporaneously without notes.[27] Against the backdrop of the allegorical interpretations that were prevalent in his day, Calvin's approach was the literal-grammatical interpretation using the original languages. He writes: "This error [of allegory] has been the source of many evils. Not only did it open the way for the adulteration of

[23] Peter Goeman, "The Reformers and the Original Languages: Calvin and Luther on the Importance of Greek and Hebrew in Theology and Ministry," The Master's Seminary Journal 28/1 (Spring, 2017), 5-16.
[24] Peter Goeman, 9.
[25] Peter Goeman, 7.
[26] Peter Goeman, 10.
[27] Peter Goeman, 10.

the natural meaning of Scripture but also set up boldness in allegorizing as the chief exegetical virtue. Thus many of the ancients without any restraint played all sorts of games with the sacred Word of God, as if they were tossing a ball to and fro."[28]

Both Luther and Calvin strongly emphasized the importance of studying Greek and Hebrew in order to correctly understand the Bible. Calvin went so far as wanting to educate all children to become godly citizens regardless of their vocation, and he wanted them to learn Hebrew, Greek and Latin.[29] His desire came to fruition as the Geneva Academy was established, and this academy produced some of the leading scholars of the Biblical languages of that time.[30] Luther too understood the importance of the original languages. He believed that men and women should read the Bible in its original languages. He said, "Do you inquire what use there is in learning the languages? Do you say, 'We can read the Bible very well in German? Without the languages we could not have received the Gospel. Languages are the scabbard that contains the sword of the Spirit; they are the casket which contains the priceless jewels of antique thought; they are the vessel that holds the wine."[31] Nonetheless the emphasis of the reformers was for the pastors and the preachers to be able to handle the word of God in its original languages in order to keep the doctrines pure and to teach and preach accurately to God's people.[32] One of the tenets of the Reformation - priesthood of all believers – did not quite apply to learning the Bible in the original languages, given the fact that the translation of the Bible in the languages of the peoples had just taken place through Luther and others. Unfortunately, even

[28] Peter Goeman, "The Reformers and the Original Languages: Calvin and Luther on the Importance of Greek and Hebrew in Theology an Ministry," The Master's Seminary Journal 28/1 (Spring, 2017), 11.
[29] Peter Goeman, 11.
[30] Peter Goeman, 11.
[31] John Piper, "Martin Luther: Lessons from His Life and Labor" (https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/martin-luther-lessons-from-his-life-and-labor), accessed May 10, 2023, and posted January 30, 1996.
[32] John Piper, 12.

with the passing of time, the situation did not improve as the original languages of Hebrew and Greek are still relegated to seminaries and a small number of specialists at universities. In fact, the sad reality is that most pastors in today's churches are not able to handle the original languages proficiently. This is why Rev. Sun Ki Kim's vision of having every Christian read the Bible in Hebrew and Greek, aided by Bible software, is ground breaking. It was by God's sovereignty that my church under the leadership of Pastor Paul Kim and his wife Dr. Rebekah Kim came to cross paths with Rev. Kim at the time when he had just published the two books *Petra Mastering Hebrew in 3 Days* and *Petra Mastering Greek in 3 Days*. And here I want to add that my church, which was founded in 1981 by Pastor Paul Kim and Dr. Rebekah Kim, has always been a church whose number one priority is the word of God. I remember being powerfully touched by Dr. Rebekah Kim's Genesis Bible study when I first came to this church 32 years ago. I believe that God who knows our hearts connected us with Rev. Kim by His mercy so that we can go deeper into His word through the original languages.

As mentioned, the importance of reading the Bible in the original languages did not quite apply to the priesthood of all believers at the time of the Reformation. This is understandable historically, given the fact the Bible was just beginning to be translated into one's own language through the impetus of the Reformation, but perhaps the time has finally come, especially with the availability of today's technology. Today's technology including the internet has not always been used for good purposes as we know, but I believe that God, in His sovereignty, is able to use it to further apply the principle of *Sola Scriptura* today in the context of *Presbyterii Fidelium* by making use of the internet and the Bible softwares to lower the threshold of the original languages.

Sola *Scriptura* was always inseparable from *Presbyterii Fidelium* because in 1 Peter 2:9, Apostle Peter explains that one of the roles of royal priesthood is to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." This role of "proclaiming" is consistent with two of the priestly duties that are described in the Old Testament. First, it is the task of offering sacrifices for the people in order to bring them to God. This would be tantamount to witnessing in the New Testament, as described by Apostle Paul in Romans 15:16, "…to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit." Second, it is the task of teaching the law. Uche Anizor and Hank Voss write[33]: "Priests have the honor of continual access to the presence of the Lord in the sanctuary…teaching the law, applying its commands to the varying circumstances of Israel's life and blessing the people in the Lord's name." And this role was clearly exemplified in Ezra the priest. Lowering the threshold of the original languages will then be able to help achieve the tenet of the priesthood of all believers to a greater extent by facilitating the Christian to better witness and to better understand the word of God as well as to teach it.

As stated previously, being able to read the Bible in the original languages is not an end in itself. The overarching purpose is to grow spiritually and ultimately to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. (Romans 8:29). With this in mind, we now turn to two noteworthy theologies of spiritual formation.

[33] Uche Anizor and Hank Voss, *Representing Christ: A Vision for the Priesthood of All Believers* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016), 25.

Jonathan Edwards' Theology of Spiritual Formation

In chapter 1, I discussed regarding the facilitation of spiritual formation in terms of desire and habits in three areas – word, prayer and witnessing. In the language of Edwards, *desire* may be referred to generally as *holy affections*[34]. More specifically, Edwards used various terms such as *inclination, will* or *heart*. He writes[35]:

> The other faculty is that by which the soul does not merely perceive and view things, but is some way inclined to 'em, or is disinclined, and averse from 'em; or is the faculty by which the soul does not behold things, as an indifferent unaffected spectator, but either as liking or disliking, pleased or displeased, approving or rejecting…it is sometimes called the *inclination*; and, as it has respect to the actions that are determined and governed by it, is called the *will*; and the mind, with regard to the exercises of this faculty, is often called the *heart*.

For Edwards, these affections do not just come from nowhere, but rather, they "arise from the mind's being enlightened, rightly and spiritually to understand or apprehend divine things."[36] He adds: "Holy affections are not heat without light; but evermore arise from some information of the understanding, or some spiritual instruction that the mind receives, some light or actual knowledge…"[37] Understanding the Bible in the original languages can serve as a light that causes spiritual desire to arise. These affections, in turn, become the source of one's actions, further underlying the importance of affections, as he says, "…true religion must consist very much in the affections."[38]

Edwards is nonetheless quick to point out that religious affections are often mixed and not every one of them is spiritual. And here, Edwards, the greatest American theologian,

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[34] John E. Smith et al, ed., "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 141.
[35] John E. Smith et al, ed., 141.
[36] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[37] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[38] John E. Smith et al, ed., 145.

skillfully brings in the role of habits, as he writes: "And the degree of religion is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, than by the degree of the present exercise; and the strength of that habit is not always in proportion to outward effects and manifestations…"[39] Edwards' point is that just because religious affections may be mixed, one should not throw them away like garbage since "true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections,"[40] but rather let them settle down as holy habits, which can keep the fire going. In other words, habits play an important role in the life of the believer in that over time, not only does it filter out the unspiritual affections, but it also keeps the genuine desires going.

For Edwards, the importance of habits in the life of the Christian does not stop here. These habits should become Christian practice, the fruit of gracious and holy affections.[41] He says that this implies three things. First, this practice should universally conform to and be directed by Christian rules.[42] Second, the Christian should be so devoted to this so as to make this his or her "work and business."[43] And third, the Christian should continue this practice to the end of his or her life.[44] He explains that "true grace is not an unactive thing; there is nothing in heaven or earth of a more active nature; for 'tis life itself, and the most active kind of life…there is nothing in the universe that in its nature has a greater tendency to fruit."[45] He writes further: "Godliness in the heart has as direct a relation to practice, as a fountain has to a stream, or as the

[39] John E. Smith et al, ed., "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 146.
[40] John E. Smith et al, ed., 141.
[41] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[42] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[43] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[44] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[45] John E. Smith et al, ed., 165.

luminous nature of the sun has to beams sent forth, or as life has to breathing…"[46] I believe that Edwards wholeheartedly will agree with my working definition of spiritual formation as growing in desire and changing in habits with regard to the word of God.

Dr. Rebekah Kim's Theology of Spiritual Formation

Dr. Rebekah Kim, my spiritual leader, gave a seminal Bible study on Romans chapter 7 at Harvard Asian Baptist Student Koinonia (ABSK) in 2014. From 2014 to 2016, she taught this Bible study to different groups of people within our church network. The title of her Bible study from Romans 7 was "Who am I?" She was able to refine her insights and understanding during those two years, but according to her own words, her insights were a culmination of her lifetime ministry of raising spiritual leaders among college students.[47]

Although there have been well-known scholars and preachers, such as Greek fathers like Chrysostom, who thought that Romans 7 refers to the unregenerate[48], Dr. Rebekah Kim sides with the rest including Augustine, Calvin and Luther, who considered Romans 7 to be a description of the Christian experience.[49] In 2015, all the churches in our network had a gathering in Ohio.[50] One of the messages that she gave on that occasion was from Romans 7. The following is an excerpt from the transcript of that message:[51]

> Verse 14: "For we know that the law is spiritual." Good, the law is not bad. "But I am of the flesh." Who is this 'I'? "…sold under sin?" Verse 25: "For I do not understand." Who

[46] John E. Smith et al, ed., "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995),165.
[47] In a private conversation with Dr. Rebekah Kim and Pastor Francis Lee in 2020.
[48] Stephen Voorwinde, "Romans 7 – A History of Interpretation," Vox Reformata, no. 83 (2018): 74.
[49] Stephen Voorwinde, "Romans 7 – A History of Interpretation," Vox Reformata, no. 83 (2018): 78.
[50] Our church network gathered for the 2015 SBC Annual Meeting in Columbus, Ohio. By God's sovereignty, Dr. Rebekah Kim fulfilled a vow that she made 40 years before while a grad student at OSU in Columbus, Ohio – to proclaim God's goodness to His congregation in that very location. She gave a powerful message proclaiming God's goodness at a worship service that our church network held at OSU before the SBC Annual Meeting. After the SBC Annual Meeting, our church network had a retreat in Huron, Ohio.
[51] The transcript of Dr. Rebekah Kim's message is from June 18, 2015, in Huron, Ohio.

> is this 'I'? "…my own actions". Who is this 'my'? I want you to try to figure out all these pronouns. What do these pronouns indicate? Whom do these pronouns indicate? "For I do not do what I want," so 'I,' 'I,' 'I'… who is this 'I'? "But I do the very thing I hate." I hate the things, but I do the very things. Who is this 'I', first 'I,' second 'I.' "Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law." There are so many 'I's. Are all these 'I's the same or different? Verse 17: "So now, it is no longer I who do it..." Very confusing. Who is this 'I?' Verse 17: "…but sin…" So instead of 'I' or 'me,' sin. Sin does something? "…sin that dwells…" - very personified. "…sin that dwells within me." Who is this 'me'? Sin dwells where? Within 'me.' This 'me' is equivalent to those many 'I's prior to this 'me'? Verse 18: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me." Who knows this fact? Who is this 'I'? "... in me, that is, in my flesh." My flesh? Who owns this flesh? Who is this 'I,' 'my'? "... for I have the desire to do what is right." Seemingly, this 'I' is a good 'I' because this 'I' has the desire to do what is right…but not the ability to carry it out. Verse 19: "For I do not do the good..." Sounds like this 'I' again is bad. Are you following me? Even though it's very confusing, at least you should try to follow me…I want you guys to follow my questions. Do not just think that you understood this text. It's very hard. As much as this text is hard to understand, it's hard for us to be spiritual…because we don't know ourselves. We are extremely confused. There are too many 'I's within me…who dwell within me. Which 'I' should I follow? We don't know ourselves clearly. No wonder we are defeated by Satan every day. Our ignorance leads us to defeat."

Dr. Rebekah Kim makes a clear distinction between spirit and soul according to the ample Biblical evidence in the New Testament such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," and Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active, shaper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."[52] Although it is not the scope of this thesis-project to do a comprehensive survey on this theme in today' evangelicalism, it is nonetheless a confusing theme in today's evangelical literature. John Ortberg, for example, in his book *Soul Keeping* mentions the words *spirit* or *Spirit* only three times even though the whole book seems to pertain to spiritual formation.[53] I believe that in

[52] This whole section comes from Dr. Rebekah Kim's transcripts of Bible studies on Romans 7 from 2015 – 2016. The specific transcript will not be noted unless direct quotations are given.
[53] John Ortberg, *Soul Keeping* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014).

places where he meant *spirit*, he uses *soul* instead; and his putative confusion is but an indication of the confusion at large regarding the difference between spirit and soul in today's evangelicalism.

Dr. Rebekah Kim states that the human being is the only trichotomous creature that God has created, meaning that he or she has spirit, soul and body. Angels have spirit and soul, and animals have soul and body. According to her, the non-Christian is one whose spirit is dead, as it is written in Ephesians 2:1, "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins…" But by repenting and believing in Jesus, the Christian's spirit has been made alive – in other words, the Holy Spirit has become one with his or her spirit. The question still remains: on the one hand, why do 'I' delight in God's law? and on the other hand, why do 'I' do what I hate? Here Dr. Rebekah Kim insightfully points to the problem of the regenerate soul. The soul consists of intellect, will and emotions. She says that although the soul of the Christian has been regenerated, it is still sold under the flesh according to Romans 7:14, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin." She considers *sin, evil* and *flesh* as synonymous in Romans 7, and she underlines the fact that Apostle Paul twice mentions *sin that dwells within me* (v17 and v20), implying something that is living – that is, the very stronghold of Satan. Just to clarify, she is not talking about demon possession but rather the reality of Satanic activities that are possible through the flesh in the life of the believer according to 2 Corinthians 10:4, "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." Quoting Rev. Sun Ki Kim[54], Dr. Rebekah Kim considers Apostle Paul's discovery of this *flesh* that lies close at hand (v21) more significant than Einstein's formulation of The Theory of General Relativity. Modifying Avery Willis' diagram[55] in *The Disciple's Personality – Masterlife*, Dr. Rebekah Kim

[54] This is from Rev. Sun Ki Kim's seminar on Romans 6 – 8 in Los Angeles, CA, in 2015. I was present.
[55] Avery Willis Jr., *The Disciple's Personality – Masterlife* (Nashville: Lifeway, 1996), 133-139.

has come up with a poignant diagram of "Who am I?" in Romans 7. Figure 2 is an explanation of the unregenerate person, whose spirit is dead. Figure 3 is a description of the regenerate person, as portrayed in Romans 7.

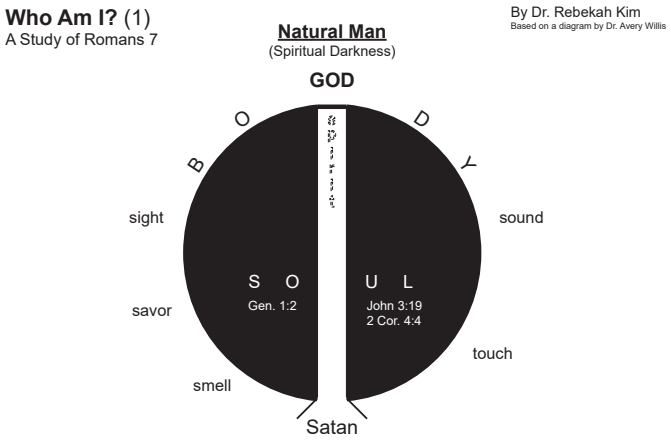


Figure 2

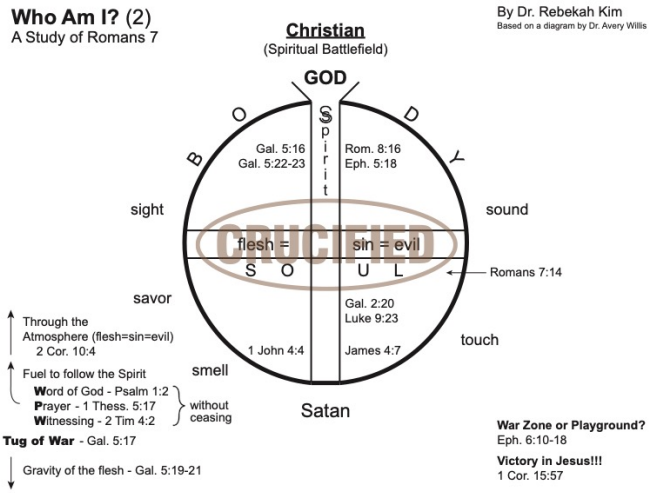


Figure 3

In Figure 3, the outer circle represents the body with its five senses. The door has been opened to God because the Christian has been reconciled to God, with the result that the Spirit is indwelling in the Christian. The oneness of the Holy Spirit and the Christian's spirit is indicated by the capital letter *S*, which overlaps with the lower case *s.* Through the cross of Jesus, the flesh and the soul have been crucified. Whereas the soul is one with the flesh, following the prince of the power of the air in the unregenerate person (Figure 2), the soul has been set free from the flesh in the regenerate person. The regenerate soul, however, is sold under the flesh, especially in the life of a Christian who is still fleshly (v14). In the diagram, this soul then is below the flesh. Dr. Rebekah Kim refers to the flesh as *the gravity of sin*. Just as we are subject to the earth's gravity, so the fleshly soul, though regenerate, is subject to the influence of the flesh. From her experience, she says that this is especially true of our emotions. The relationship between the soul and the flesh can be likened to former best friends. Although their relationship has been severed through the cross of Jesus, the flesh, nonetheless, can have a strong influence on the regenerate soul, especially on emotions. According to Dr. Rebekah Kim, the regenerate person does not have to worry about his or her spirit because it is one with the Holy Spirit, so the flesh cannot get to it. In addition, she reasons that although the flesh dwells in the body (v23), the body itself is neutral, as can be seen from Romans 6:12-13. In other words, the answer to the complex problem of "who am I?" lies with the soul, even the regenerate one.

How can the regenerate soul overcome the flesh or the gravity of sin? To answer this question, Dr. Rebekah Kim uses the illustration of the rocket fuel. In order for the rocket to overcome the earth's gravity, it has to have enough propulsion for the take-off. More specifically, the rocket needs enough fuel to blast off through the earth's atmosphere. According to Dr. Rebekah Kim, the fuel that is needed for the regenerate soul to overcome the gravity of sin is the

word of God, prayer and witnessing (WPW). As noted in Figure 3, the gravity of sin is explained by 2 Corinthians 10:4 and Galatians 5:19-21. Figure 3 also shows the verses that Dr. Rebekah Kim gave for each of the three components of the fuel - namely Psalm 1:2 for the word of God, 1 Thessalonians 5:17 for prayer and 2 Timothy 4:2 for witnessing. And her point is that the Christian needs to practice WPW without ceasing to have enough fuel for the blast-off.

Previously, my working definition of spiritual formation was given as growing in desire and changing in habits with regard to the word of God. According to Dr. Rebekah Kim then, this definition can be expanded beyond the word of God to prayer and witnessing. In chapter 1, I talked about the inseparable relationship between the word of God and prayer as well as the importance of witnessing in spiritual formation, an area that is often neglected in the conversations regarding spiritual formation.

Spiritual formation is ultimately God's work because as Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:7, it is "only God who gives the growth." And God's work does not take place apart from God's word and His Spirit. Dr. David Currie writes[56]: "Spiritual formation can then be understood as continuing the pattern of creation in giving form and filling up. God's word is intended to keep forming humans into the image of God's Son and to be the vehicle to keep humans with God's Spirit." And here, an important Scripture reference is Hebrews 4:12, which reads, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Only the word of God helps us to see the complexity of the Christian's inside including the flesh, as I have already described from Dr. Rebekah's Romans 7 Bible studies. From her knowledge of *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, Dr. Rebekah Kim says that having

[56] David Currie, "Shaped by the Word: Sola Scriptura for Spiritual Formation" in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon Isaac and Eckhard Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 51.

the knowledge of the enemy as well as oneself leads to 100 % victory. This is the victory in Jesus for the glory of God.

According to Apostle Paul, prayer is essential to engagement with the Spirit (Romans 8:26). It also follows that in order to overcome the gravity of sin, one must take sin seriously, so repentance as an integral part of prayer plays an important role as well. The work of the Spirit in witnessing is nowhere better attested than in Acts 1:8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Just as the Christian is saved by grace, his or her spiritual formation is God's work since only God is able to empower the Christian overcome the gravity of sin. This will then bring the regenerate soul into the spiritual orbit, where it will be led by the Spirit, enabling the Christian to live an abundant, exciting and fruit-bearing life according to Galatians 5:16. Facilitating spiritual formation through the teaching of the Bible in Hebrew then should include motivating the participants to practice WPW so that they can have the fuel for the blast-off into the spiritual orbit, having overcome the gravity of sin.

Dr. Rebekah understands the danger that WPW can result in religious Pharisaism without the right desire, but on the other hand, she will be the first one to highlight the importance of godly practice and habits in our daily life.[57] One reason for this that she herself lives this out faithfully and powerfully[58], so in addition to WPW as a Biblical theology, she herself embodies WPW as a practical theology. When I was an M.Div. student at Gordon-Conwell from 1989 to

[57] I cannot count how many times I have heard Dr. Rebekah Kim teach on these themes, so I myself am a witness, especially from 2015 to now.
[58] This is my testimony from our 33-year relationship from 1991 to now.

1992, I came to know Dr. Christie Wilson, who also embodied WPW as a practical theology. Thank God for these living examples of spiritual formation!

Dr. Rebekah Kim's Koinonia Cross

Dr. Rebekah Kim completed her D. Min. at Gordon-Conwell several years ago. Her thesis-project was titled, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska."[59] In it, she described church as a web of Jesus-centered relationships, and in particular, she talked about four different kinds of relationships that comprise what she called *Koinonia Cross*[60], as illustrated in Figure 4. The very center and the hinge of Koinonia Cross is one's relationship with his or her Lord Jesus.

[59] Rebekah Kim, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska," D. Min. thesis-project (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2018)
[60] Rebekah Kim, 30.

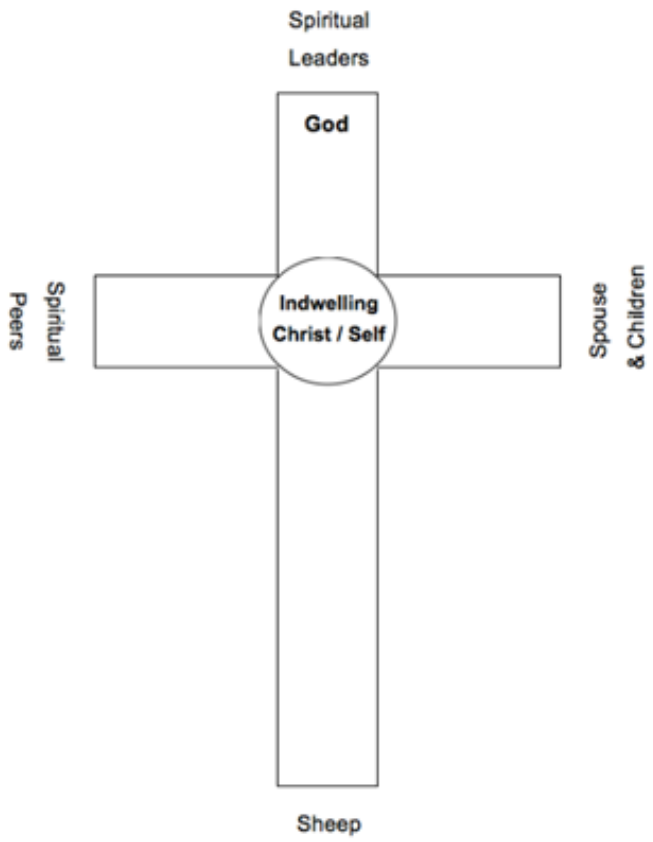


Figure 4

According to Dr. Rebekah Kim, the Bible itself is the basis of each of the 4 kinds of relationships. The first kind of relationship is with spiritual leaders. The basis of this kind of relationship is Paul/Timothy (Philippians 2:19-23) and Naomi/Ruth (Ruth 1:16-17) relationships in the Bible. The second kind of relationship is with spiritual peers, as exemplified by David/Jonathan relationship (2 Samuel 1:26). And the third kind of relationship is with one's spouse. The fourth kind of relationship is with one's sheep.

In addition to the idea of accountability that accompanies God-centered relationships, Dr. Rebekah Kim calls Koinonia Cross a spiritual inventory of the Christian.[61] Referring to the great commandment in Matthew 22:36-39 as well as 1 John 4:20-21, she reasons that loving one's neighbor is a proof of one's loving God.[62] And it goes without saying that loving one another should result in Christ-centered relationships. According to Dr. Rebekah Kim then, a healthy spiritual formation should be reflected in Koinonia Cross relationships. Furthermore, when spiritual formation is discussed in today's evangelical world, one's individual relationship with God is placed at the forefront. What Dr. Rebekah Kim proposes in her D. Min. project is that spiritual formation should be reflected in a church as well because "the true church is a gathering of believers who are born again through the Spirit of God and who are able to have *koinonia* in the life and love of God through Christ."[63] Dr. Rebekah Kim's insights are seminal as it relates spiritual formation with church. For this thesis-project, however, I would like to add a qualifier. Due to the short-term nature of this project, I do not necessarily expect the participants' Koinonia Cross to be drastically altered. Nonetheless, I know that nothing is impossible with our God, so my hope is that this short-term project may spur spiritual formation to the point of encouraging the participants toward God-centered relationships even in some small measure, as they are challenged to depend on one another and to love God more through His word.

In conclusion, being able to the read the Old Testament in Hebrew should serve as a spark that ignites a godly desire and godly habits with regard to WPW, facilitating spiritual formation. This is not based on some wishful thinking but rather on a solid Biblical and theological

[61] Rebekah Kim, "Raising Future Leaders through Koinonia Cross Relationships at Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska," D. Min. thesis-project (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 2018), 34.
[62] Rebekah Kim, 34-35.
[63] Rebekah Kim, 34.

foundation, which was given in this chapter. The importance of the word of God in facilitating spiritual formation will be addressed further in the literature review in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, some of the pertinent books that relate to this thesis-project will be reviewed. The first three books deal with the Hebrew language and the advantages that knowing it offers to our Christian life. The rest of the books, however, will focus on spiritual formation in its manifold dimensions. Among this group, I have included the autobiography of George Mueller, whose deep spirituality included the reading of the Old Testament in Hebrew language.

Mastering Hebrew in Three Days by Sun Ki Kim

The following is the preface to *Mastering Hebrew in Three Days*[1]:

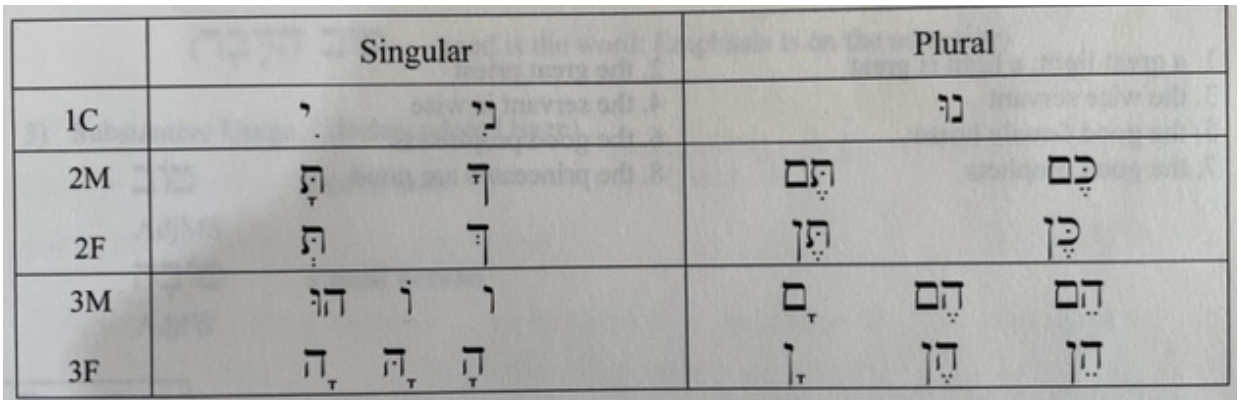
> During the Middle Ages, Galileo, while walking out from a religious trial, remarked famously, 'And yet it [the sun] moves.' The conclusion of my life after devoting 30 years to Greek and Hebrew is, 'And yet we should study the Bible in its original languages.' My goal for these 30 years has been to see the day when every Korean Christian reads the Bible in Greek and Hebrew.

In my own attempt to be grounded in Biblical Hebrew, I took the 1-year course (two semesters) of introductory Biblical Hebrew three times - first at Gordon-Conwell, then at Capital Theological Seminary in Maryland, and finally at Wesley Theological Seminary in DC. Three different textbooks were used for these classes. The Gordon-Conwell class used the well-known Hebrew textbook by Thomas Lambdin[2]; The Capital Theological Seminary class used the well-known textbook by Seow[3]; and Wesley Theological Seminary used a lesser-known textbook by

[1] Sun Ki Kim, *Mastering Hebrew in Three Days* (Seoul: Petra, 2010), 5.
[2] Thomas Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1973).
[3] C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1995).

Vanlier Hunter.[4] In addition, I am familiar with the introductory Biblical Hebrew textbook by Gary Pratico and Miles Van Pelt[5] as well as the one by Allen Ross.[6]

All of these books are excellent books by excellent Hebrew scholars. But I would say that Rev. Sun Ki Kim's book is different for three reasons. His background as a mathematics professor is evident in the way that he can conceptually bring complicated things together to make the concepts simpler. One case in point is the way that he explains pronomial suffixes. Typically, an aspiring Hebrew student has to memorize these pronomial suffixes with every class of prepositions. In addition the student has to memorize the conjugation of every verb with all of its endings. But Rev. Kim factors the pronomial suffixes according to the distributive property in mathematics, and comes up with the following figure, which is a photograph from his book[7].



	Singular			Plural		
1C	יִ	נִי		נוּ		
2M	תָּ	ךָ		תֶּם	כֶּם	
2F	תְּ	ךְ		תֶּן	כֶּן	
3M	הוּא	וֹ	ו	ם	הֶם	הֵם
3F	ה	הָ	הּ	ן	הֶן	הֵן

Figure 5

[4] Vanlier Hunter, *Biblical Hebrew Workbook: An Inductive Study for Beginners* (Lanham, MD : University Press of America, 1988).
[5] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, Edition #3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019).
[6] Allen P. Ross, *Introducing Biblical Hebrew* (Ada, Michigan: Baker, 2001).
[7] Sun Ki Kim, *Mastering Hebrew in Three Days* (Seoul: Petra, 2010), 40.

And this is his explanation underneath Figure 4. He says that these key suffixes are pronomial suffixes. When they are attached to a preposition, they function as the object of the preposition. When they are attached to a noun, they function as a possessive pronoun; and when they are attached to a verb, they become the subject or the direct object of that verb.[8] This organization of the pronomial suffixes may not seem like much, but to me, it is a stroke of genius because Figure 4 contains all the pronomial suffixes that one will ever see and the familiarity of the chart will boost his or her confidence in learning Hebrew.

The second unique characteristic of Rev. Kim's book is his emphasis on concepts and his deemphasis on the need to memorize. In fact, he repeatedly made the point that one does not have to memorize anything except for the alphabet and the vowel points.[9] How is this possible? His answer is - through the use of Bible softwares and internet resources.[10] His point is to make use of all the work that have been done by the scholars previously, which have been made available in Bible softwares and internet resources. He also said comically that if the meanings of the Hebrew words come into one's memory through the repeated use, then he or she should not refuse them.

This then ties in to the third characteristic of Rev. Kim's book. As I alluded to in Chapter 1, this is a book that was birthed through the strenuous toil of his life-long commitment in teaching Hebrew and Greek to Korean Christians, and it came at a time when he felt that he had failed because it seemed almost impossible for people to learn the languages and retain them[11], but by the grace of God, God gave him wisdom to write this book that can not only help one to learn Hebrew in three days, but also to motivate the reader to continue as a life-long student. And

[8] Sun Ki Kim, *Mastering Hebrew in Three Days* (Seoul: Petra, 2010), 40.
[9] Sun Ki Kim, 24-25.
[10] From his 14 seminars in Korea and in the US from 2010 – 2015, which I attended.
[11] Sun Ki Kim, 4.

I believe this is why this book is full of wisdom, encouragement and grace. Thankfully, this book was translated into English by Deaconess Jin Young Seo in our church network, so it is now made available to English speakers as well.

The Rewards of Learning Greek and Hebrew by Catherine McDowell and Philip H. Towner

I like the words given by Craig Evans in the foreword that "learning Greek and Hebrew is not just an academic thing; it is a life-changing thing."[12] Furthermore, I like the word "rewards" in the title of the book. The reason is that it situates learning the original languages in its proper place. That is, it certainly is not a matter of salvation. I did not come to know the Lord by reading the Bible in its original languages, but rather in English. Nonetheless, the effort that it takes to be able to read the Bible in the original languages has its reward – a harvest of deeper understanding in the Bible that can change lives.

Catherine McDowell gives ten examples in the book which serve to highlight the advantages one has in being able to read the Old Testament in Hebrew. I was blessed to read her various insights, which covered a range of nuances and emphases. As she said more than once, although English translations are excellent, they cannot always fully render the meanings that are contained in Hebrew.[13] Although I cannot discuss all ten examples, I want to give a taste of the difference that reading the Old Testament in Hebrew makes by alluding to two of the examples that she gives.

The first example pertains to the *waw*-consecutive form of the Hebrew verbal system. This is a simple past tense that is created by attaching the Hebrew word *wa* to a prefixed or an

[12] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, *The Rewards of Learning Greek and Hebrew* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2021), vii.
[13] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 3.

imperfect verb. A sequence of these verb forms signifies a sequential action.[14]Although the English translations often use "and" or "then" to translate the word *wa,* according to Catherine McDowell, "sometimes it is better not the translate *waw* separately at all"[15]in order to preserve the force of sequential actions. Genesis 3:6a reads in ESV, "…she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." While this is a good translation, nonetheless reading it in Hebrew adds a deeper insight. Catherine McDowell writes[16]:

> Befitting the severity of the consequences and the suddenness with which the paradise was lost, the sequence of Hebrew verbs in Gen 3:6a reads as if Adam and Eve were tumbling down a steep incline:
>
> *wattiqakh* (she took)
> *watto'khal* (she ate)
> *wattitten* (she gave)
> *wayyo'khal* (he ate)

She makes the point that the author could have placed the emphasis on something else, but by using four *waw*-consecutive verbs, he was capturing the reader's attention on the rebellious acts themselves, which came about swiftly.[17]The nuance and the power of the *waw*-consecutive verb form, which is the most ubiquitous verb form in the Old Testament, are often lost in translation as can be seen with Genesis 3:6a.

The second example that Catherine McDowell gives comes from Genesis 2:15. The two Hebrew verbs that are used that verse are *'avad* and *shamar.* Our English translations render these verbs in various ways. For example, ESV translates them, "to work and keep," and NIV says, "to work and take care of." Amazingly, this verb pair appears in only one other context in

[14] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, *The Rewards of Learning Greek and Hebrew* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2021), 9.
[15] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 9.
[16] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 10.
[17] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 11.

the Old Testament – in describing the duties of the Levites in the tabernacle (Numbers 3:7-8; 8:6; 18:5-6).[18]But the English translations, perhaps taking into account the context of the ministry in the tabernacle, translates these verbs differently from Genesis 2:15. ESV translates them, "to guard and minister/serve," and NIV translates them, "to take care/perform duties/be responsible and to work."[19] As Catherine McDowell notes, "…the association between the Levitical duties to care for the tabernacle in Numbers with Adam's responsibilities to "work and keep" the garden of Eden in Gen 2 is obscured. The loss is quite significant."[20]This is clearly an example of something getting lost in translation because the translations cannot ignore the context.

There is one point that Catherine McDowell makes, however, which I find interesting. In Chapter 1 of her book, she talks about the translation of the word *'dām*. She opts for "humanity" instead of "man" in Genesis 1:26-27. Her point is that the use of the article *ha* does not preclude the translation "humanity" since the use of the article *ha* is anaphoric in this context. Certainly, her translation does not change the meaning of Genesis 1:26-27 since even if one were to translate *'dām* as "man", as is the case with most English Bibles[21], "man" refers to humanity in these verses. But I would opt for "man" in translating these verses. My reason is two-fold. First in Genesis Chapters 1-3, "humanity" as a translation for *'dām* will not be appropriate in most instances, especially as the Genesis narrative focuses on what happens in the Garden of Eden. In this specific narrative, I cannot think of a single instance where "humanity" will be an appropriate translation. The second reason, which is related to the first, is that by keeping *'dām* as "man," one is able to see the history of God's creation of humanity more clearly – that is, we

[18] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, *The Rewards of Learning Greek and Hebrew* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2021), 14.
[19] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 14.
[20] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 14.
[21] Catherine L. McDowell and Philip H. Towner, 3.

all began from one man Adam, as Apostle Paul states in Acts 17:26, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling places…" I do understand that McDowell's preference for "humanity" instead of "man" may stem from her attempt to avoid the incorrect inference that the primary emphasis has to do with gender since "male and female he created them." Nonetheless for the reasons given above, I would still opt for "man" for *'dām* instead of "humanity."

The above example illustrates the point that knowing the original languages is not everything. Once all the possible translations are laid out with the help of the original languages, the final choice is a theological and spiritual one. I am not saying that Catherine McDowell is wrong, and I am right. I am simply saying that just like many important things in our Christian life, humility is required for us to make the right choice that pleases God.

Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar **by Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt**

Professor Gary Pratico was my first Hebrew language teacher at Gordon-Conwell, so this book, which is representative of his many years of teaching Hebrew, brings back many memories. But the reason that I have included this book in this chapter is not because of the Hebrew grammar that is carefully and accurately explained in the book, but rather because of what the authors called, "Something You Should Know, Consider, or Memorize." These excurses or essays are found at the end of every chapter.

In Chapter 5 of the book, Bruce Waltke, for example, gives a theological motivation for studying the original languages. He writes[22]: "Shortly after I began the study of Hebrew, over forty years ago now, I became motivated to comprehend the biblical languages when I realized

[22] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, Edition #3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 45.

that most of my knowledge of God was derived from Holy Scripture, and the accuracy of that knowledge was contingent upon the correctness with which I handled its languages." His words are quite challenging, and even if one were to not pursue a Ph.D. in New Testament or Old Testament, he or she as a child of God should take the word of God seriously by delving into the original languages by the grace of God, as is proposed by this thesis-project.

In Chapter 6 of the book, John Piper talks about God's humbling himself not only in the incarnation of Jesus but also in the inspiration of the Scriptures.[23]Interestingly, he says that just as the manger and the cross were not sensational, neither are grammar and syntax. And since "God humbled himself to take on human flesh and to speak human language, woe to us if we arrogantly presume to ignore the humanity of Christ and the grammar of Scripture."[24] To me, this is not straightforward, and I am not sure if I am in total agreement with what John Piper says, especially when he mentions the arrogance of ignoring the grammar of Scripture. Nonetheless, what is evident is his high view of knowing the Scriptures in the languages that God has inspired them in. I believe that in addition to incarnation, the original languages also bring to mind God's sovereignty. If a person is born in the US, he or she would be expected to speak English. In the same way, for every child of God, for whom the Scriptures play a central role in his or her relationship with God, should not he or she come to know the languages that the Scriptures were originally written in?

Since there obviously is a space limitation, one more example will be given. Jonathan Kline, grandson of the late Professor Meredith Kline, talks about the meaning of *peṣaḥ.*[25] He says that the root *pṣḥ* has two meanings – "to limp" and "to cover, hover" – neither of which

[23] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, Edition #3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 55.
[24] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, 55.
[25] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, 64.

means “to pass over,” as is often translated. Throughout the history of Biblical interpretation, *psḥ* was at times translated “to limp”, such as in 1 Kings 18:21, because of the adjective *piṣē(a)ḥ* “lame.” *Texts* such as Isaiah 31:5 and the avian imagery of God found in Genesis and Exodus, however, point to the meaning “to cover, hover.” He writes: “Returning to Exod 12, we perceive that the situation that obtained on the night before the exodus was not that of God “passing by” the homes of the Israelites. Rather, during that dark night of death the Lord protectively “hovered over” his people as an abiding, shielding presence.”[26]

The above examples are just a few samples from the 28 excurses or short essays that testify to the importance of learning Hebrew. I wish I had this book when I was learning Hebrew for the first book because these excurses surely can help to motivate the student to endure through the hurdles of grammatical concepts. From my personal experience of teaching the basics of Hebrew grammar, I can testify that I lose people quickly if I do not motivate them often. On the one hand, a child of God should need no motivation in learning Hebrew, but on the other hand, as a weak sinner, a child of God needs a constant reminder why he or she needs to endure through learning Hebrew.

***A Jonathan Edwards Reader* edited by John Smith, Harry S. Stout and Kenneth P Minkema**

I have chosen this book because of the significant role that Jonathan Edwards’ theology occupies in all areas of spiritual life, especially spiritual formation. In addition, I have read his book *Religious Affections* many years ago, and I was struck by the insights from this genius, so I decided to revisit it.

[26] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar, Edition #3* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 66.

Edwards writes in his preface:[27] "There is no question whatsoever, that is of greater importance to mankind…than this, what are the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards? Or, which comes to the same thing, What is the nature of true religion?" This is how Edwards expressed back then what we would call today spiritual formation. He furthermore states in the preface that despite the oppositions it will incur, including indignations and hurts, he wants to write on this topic because of its great importance.[28]

The relevant content of Edwards' *Religious Affections* was described in Chapter 2 already, so I do not want to be repetitive, and I will just summarize here. Edwards highlights the importance of what he calls "holy affections"[29]in true religion. By holy affections, he meant holy desire, but Edwards uses various terms to explain them such as inclination, will and heart.[30] A stroke of genius on his part is the relationship that he describes between affections and the role of habits. He basically says that not all affections are genuine, but that genuine affections or desire will result in godly habits.[31] These habits then become Christian practice, which is the fruit of genuine holy affections.[32]

Jonathan Edwards' insight in spiritual formation is very encouraging. If arguably the greatest American mind says that "true religion, in great part, consists in holy affections,"[33]and furthermore, he insightfully places the role of habits as the fruit (and therefore the test) of genuine affections, I am quite encouraged to know that this thesis-project has the right trajectory.

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[27] John E. Smith et al, ed., "A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections" in *A Jonathan Edwards Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 137.
[28] John E. Smith et al, ed., 138.
[29] John E. Smith et al, ed., 141.
[30] John E. Smith et al, ed., 141.
[31] John E. Smith et al, ed., 146.
[32] John E. Smith et al, ed., 164.
[33] John E. Smith et al, ed., 141.

As I stated before, the purpose of teaching the Bible in the original languages is to kindle a spiritual desire in the heart of the participant, as he or she is encouraged and challenged by the depth of God's word. Desire should then result in godly habits that lead to transformation – that is, in genuine spiritual formation.

Shaped by the Word by M. Robert Mulholland Jr.

I believe that this book is an important book that pertains to spiritual formation because it addresses the framework of the relationship between the Christian and the word of God. One of the strengths of the book is a section that is titled, "How to 'Read' without 'Reading.'"[34] In it, Mulholland contrasts the controlling or the rational type of reading that people often do in our society with listening for God.[35] According to him, listening for God involves one's heart and spirit, and the response to the word of God takes place in the deeper levels of one's being.[36]

Mulholland defines spiritual formation as "the process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others."[37] And as such, this is a "lifelong process of growth into the image of Christ."[38] He distinguishes the informational reading of the Bible from formational reading.[39] Informational reading is what we are accustomed to in this world, and the purpose is to gain knowledge and learn new techniques. Once again, this kind of relating to the Bible is rational and functional. The formational reading of the Bible is to have the same spirit as the authors of the Bible, which means encountering the living God who speaks to us and allowing Him to form us through His word. On a practical level, Mulholland seems to be against things

[34] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., *Shaped by the Word* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2000), 19.
[35] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., 20.
[36] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., 22.
[37] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., 25.
[38] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., 25.
[39] M. Robert Mulholland Jr., 50.

like Bible-reading programs such as reading through the Bible in one year because these fall in the category of controlling type of reading rather than listening.

While I do not agree with everything that Mulholland writes in the book,[40] I am in general agreement with what he writes, especially with regard to the formational characteristic of the word of God and the reader having the posture of listening in order to trust and obey rather than learning some techniques or gaining some knowledge only. I believe that the being able to read the Bible in the original languages can promote what Mulholland proposes in his book. First, reading the Bible in the original languages causes one to have a greater reverence for the word of God as one delves into the depth of the word of God, enabling him or her to respond on a deeper level. Second, it slows down the reading, helping the reader to pause and listen rather than quickly reading through to the end of the chapter. From my own practice, slowing down the pace of reading the Bible, just because I am reading it in Hebrew, does wonders in terms of meditating on the word of God.

Based on what Mulholland writes, there can also be pitfalls in reading the Bible in the original languages. It can possibly lead to obtaining just more head knowledge, which puffs up, as Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 8:1. It can also possibly tilt one to seek some kind of esoteric insights through the original languages, and the problem here is that he or she is engaged in a glorified form of informational or functional reading of the Bible. The result is that one is controlling the reading rather than being controlled by what is being read, namely the word of God. This is why teaching the Bible in the original languages should be done with fear and trembling, bathed with much prayer, so that the Holy Spirit may help to forge the right kind of

[40] Two points of disagreement have to do with first, when he goes so far as to say that we human beings are a word of God because God has spoken us forth into being, and second, when he says that the Bible is iconographic. This would be an oversimplification of the Scriptures.

relationship between the Christian and the word of God, a relationship of listening for God that leads to spiritual formation rather than just information gathering.

Reformation Celebration edited by Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel

From this book that was written by Gordon-Conwell professors to celebrate the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, I have chosen two essays in the section titled, "*Sola Scriptura*: Scripture Alone." The first essay "Torah is Psalm 119"[41] is by Seong Hyun Park, an Old Testament professor at Gordon-Conwell. This essay has many interesting tidbits about Psalm 119, which are helpful to learn. I especially like Professor Park's chart which talks about the different parts of the body that are involved in response to each of the eight Hebrew words that are used for the word of God.[42] As according to *Shema* in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, our response to God's word must involve every part of our being.

I am a little puzzled nonetheless by the distinction that Professor Park makes among *tôrâ*, *Tôrâ* and "Torah."[43] He says that *tôrâ* refers to "law," *Tôrâ* refers to the first five books of Moses, and finally, "Torah" refers to the broad concept that forms the central theme in Psalm 119. I understand that the five books of Moses are called *Tôrâ* according to the Jewish tradition, so that distinction is granted. But I am not sure that the other distinction needs to be made. To my understanding, the eight words that are used including *tôrâ* are different facets of the word of God, like the different facets of a diamond, as I alluded to this in Chapter 2. In other words, what he refers to as "Torah" perhaps should just be translated as "the word of God" – after all, is not

[41] Seong Hyun Park, "Torah in Psalm 119," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 43-49.
[42] Seong Hyun Park, 47.
[43] Seong Hyun Park, 235.

Psalm 119 about the word of God? I realize that the Old Testament scholars refer to Psalm 119 as the "Torah" Psalm, but nonetheless, it will make it simpler to be more straightforward.

The second essay "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation"[44] is by none other than my advisor for this thesis-project, Dr. David Currie. This essay is very clear in describing the role of the word of God in spiritual formation. According to Dr. Currie, *Sola Scriptura* entails "a primacy of the word of God as the foundation of spiritual formation…"[45] He begins his argument from the beginning of creation and the beginning of the Bible because "the uniquely formative character of the Word of God"[46] is described there as "the Word gives form to what was formless and fills up what was empty."[47] More specifically, the primacy of the Word of God[48]is nowhere better seen than the repetition of the phrase "God said, 'Let…'"

Dr. Currie makes the convincing point that just as the primordial chaos would have remained chaotic apart from the Word of God, spiritual formation without the Word would be chaotic and hopeless.[49]He writes: "Spiritual formation can then be understood as continuing the pattern of creating in giving form and filling up. God's Word is intended to keep forming humans into the image of God's Son and to be the vehicle to keep filling humans with God's Spirit."[50] This brings me back many years to when I first became a Christian. I knew that I had a long way to go, especially in the way that I thought about things, and reading Genesis 1:3 - "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." – gave me much hope because I believed that through

[44] David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 50-57.
[45] David A. Currie, 51.
[46] David A. Currie, 52.
[47] David A. Currie, 52.
[48] For this section, I have capitalized Word in line with what Dr. Currie has written in the essay.
[49] David A. Currie, 52.
[50] David A. Currie, 53.

the word of God, God could do amazing things even in the way that I thought about things, so I sought to learn the word of God with all my heart.

According to Dr. Currie, just as spiritual formation takes place in response to the Word of God, spiritual malformation takes place when the Word of God is distorted, as was in the case when Eve fell in the Garden of Eden.[51]But he writes[52]: "If creation and spiritual formation were originally by the Word of God, then recreation and overcoming spiritual malformation are also by the Word of God." I really like this part because it not only highlights the primacy of the Word of God in spiritual formation and what can go wrong when the primacy of the Word of God is not heeded, but also because even in the midst of much malformation, there is hope in the power of the Word of God to recreate, reconcile and reform.

Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life **by Henri J. M. Nouwen**

In this personal and insightful book, Nouwen writes that the most basic movement of the spiritual life is the movement from illusion to prayer.[53]Through prayer, we reach out to God, "who is eternally real and from whom all reality comes forth."[54]According to Nouwen, the biggest obstacle to our genuine prayer is the illusion of immortality.[55]And it's not that we do not know our mortality in our head, but our illusion is revealed from our daily actions, thoughts and worries.

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[51] David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 55.
[52] David A. Currie, 55.
[53] Henry J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), chap. 7 – 64%, Kindle. David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 55.
[54] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 64%, Kindle.
[55] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 65%, Kindle.

Nouwen says that two of the most visible symptoms of this illusion is sentimentality and violence.[56]Sentimentality arises when we are not able "to look beyond the boundaries of human togetherness and anchor our lives in God, the source of all intimacy."[57]I do not think he is talking about genuine, God-centered relationships here but rather, relationships that are not God-centered that are nonetheless mired in sentimentality. Interestingly Nouwen says that violence also is rooted in this illusion in that the offender believes that the victim is willing to cling to his or her life as the most valuable property and will be willing to give something in exchange for that life, so the perpetrator uses violence to get what he or she wants.

In addition, Nouwen describes both the intimacy and the depth of this illusion. He says that it is at times so close to us that it's hard to express it, and furthermore, its depth is shown through even the dreams that we have.[58]

How then does one reach out to God in genuine prayer despite these inner complexities? Or as Nouwen puts it, "If prayer, understood as an intimate relationship with God, is indeed the basis of all relationships – to ourselves as well as to others – how then can we learn to pray and really experience prayer as the axis of our existence?"[59]The answer, though not a simple one, is what Nouwen calls the prayer of the heart.[60]That is, "when we cast off our illusions of immortality we can create the open-ended space in which we can stretch out our arms to our God, who transcends all our expectations, dreams and desires."[61]

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[56] Henry J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), chap. 7 - 66%, Kindle.
[57] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 67%, Kindle.
[58] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 68%, Kindle.
[59] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 70%, Kindle.
[60] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 8 - 77%, Kindle.
[61] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 7 - 76%, Kindle.

More practically, Nouwen gives three elements that he saw in the lives of those who experienced this prayer of the heart: "a contemplative reading of the word of God, a silent listening to the voice of God, and a trusting obedience to a spiritual guide."[62]Even from Nouwen's perspective, a primacy of the word of God in spiritual formation can then be seen, as he says that the word of God should direct us "first of all to contemplation and meditation."[63]This is consistent with what M. Robert Mulholland and Dr. Currie have written, as alluded to earlier. And this is also consistent with the aim of this thesis-project.

More specifically, Nouwen talks about a small book called *The Way of a Pilgrim* in Hesychasm[64]. In it, a peasant goes in search of the prayer of the heart, asking many people how to pray without ceasing. He finally comes across a monk who teaches him the Jesus prayer – "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me." He was taught to repeat this prayer thousands of times throughout the day, and eventually, he was able to experience this prayer going down to his heart so that it seemed that his heart was saying this prayer in its ordinary beating. Nouwen writes: Thus, the pilgrim, who by his confession of sin and unceasing supplication for mercy, recognizes his distance from God, finds himself traveling through the world in his most intimate company and inviting others to share in it."[65]

In addition, alluding to Bishop Theophan the Recluse, a Russian orthodox cleric, Nouwen says that "to stand in the presence of God with our mind in our heart, that is the essence of the prayer of the heart."[66]This is when our mind and heart unite in our love for God. According to the Romans 7 diagrams that are given in Chapter 2, the unity of our mind and heart occur when

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[62] Henry J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), chap. - 78%, Kindle.
[63] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 8 - 79%, Kindle.
[64] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 8 - 83%, Kindle.
[65] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 8 - 85%, Kindle.
[66] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 8 - 86%, Kindle.

our mind submits to our heart, which is controlled by the Holy Spirit. Nouwen also says that this prayer of the heart is a prayer that waits for God's time in patient expectation of His return.[67] Nouwen's book is indeed a deep one that does not just treat spiritual formation in superficial terms. His point is that the goal of spiritual formation is the prayer of the heart, which in turn, invites others to share in the love of God that results from the prayer of the heart. This book is quite challenging in helping one to examine his or her prayer life and to go deeper, breaking away from the illusion, and walk in greater intimacy with God.

In a profound way, this book reinforces the word of God, prayer and witnessing (WPW) that I talked about in Chapter 2 as a means of facilitating spiritual formation. Nouwen, however, hardly uses the word "witnessing." Instead, he uses the word "hospitality." He writes:[68] "Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place." What he opts for is a relational approach of witnessing that is not only Biblical but also effective in reaching out to unbelievers.

The Art of Missional Spirituality by Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers

The introduction of this book by a missionary couple is titled, "Both Mission and Spirituality."[69]The authors write that mission for God and intimacy with God are often considered competing with each other, with the predictable result that the mission more often than not wins out at the cost of the missionary being burned out.[70]But clearly this is not Biblical

[67] Henry J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), chap. 7 - 75%, Kindle.
[68] Henry J. M. Nouwen, chap. 4 – 38%, Kindle.
[69] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, *The Art of Missional Spirituality* (Richmond: 100 Movements Publishing, 2023), 18.
[70] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, 18.

since the greatest missionary, Apostle Paul, for example, was also someone who walked intimately with God. The authors write: "Truly fruitful mission only comes by aligning ourselves with the heart of the One who sends us, engaging in his words, works, and ways because we know who he is, not just what he calls us to do. This is what we mean by missional spirituality."[71]

By spirituality, the authors' emphasis is in spiritual practices, so much so that the book basically consists of thirty-one practices, which were tested and picked from about two hundred options.[72]These practices start from journaling, to various kinds of prayers, to studying Scripture and many other things. One of the practices, for instance, is called "Secrecy."[73] This practice is predicated on Matthew Chapter 6, where Jesus talked about the three activities that should be done in secret – giving, praying and fasting. The point that the authors are trying to make through this spiritual practice is that we should learn not to seek recognition from people and that our rewards are not meant to be received in this world since this world is not our home. Another practice called "Present Your Body as a Living Sacrifice" has to do with taking time to accept one's body according to the Biblical teaching as well as to reflect God's goodness.[74]

Although the sheer number of practices gives the impression that they are a bit too many, they nonetheless are Biblical and perhaps even balanced. The orientation of the book, however, is somewhat different from the direction of this thesis-project. Rather than starting from the word of God, which kindles spiritual desire in the Christian, who then solidifies this desire by turning them into habits and Christian practices, the authors begin with spiritual practices. They testify

[71] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, *The Art of Missional Spirituality* (Richmond: 100 Movements Publishing, 2023), 19.
[72] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, 22.
[73] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, 154.
[74] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, 165.

that these spiritual practices have sustained them as missionaries, so they must have worked for them. This perhaps implies that spiritual formation is ultimately a work of the Spirit, who is sovereign, so one cannot always put spiritual formation into a predictable mold.

One thing that I wanted to read about in this book is the role of mission or witnessing in facilitating spiritual formation. In the section called "Missional Sentness," authors write[75]: "Spiritual formation is inextricably linked with caring for those around us, all of whom are image-bearers of God. There is no spiritual formation in permanent isolation." I wish that the authors had written a little more about the direct correlation between mission and spiritual formation. Throughout the book of Acts and his epistles, we can see that Apostle Paul's intimate relationship with God cannot be separated from his role as an apostle and a missionary. I believe that everything that God gives us including our calling as missionaries or our obligation to witness is meant to facilitate spiritual formation. In Romans 8:28, Apostle Paul writes, "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." He tells us in the very next verse that God's purpose is none other than having us be conformed to the image of His Son, which is the definition of spiritual formation. My friend Simon Kang, who has been an overseas missionary for more than twenty five years, told me that the reason that he became a missionary was that for him, it was a way of clinging to Jesus.[76]

The Life of Trust by George Mueller

I wanted to conclude this literature review by reflecting on George Mueller's delightful autobiography *The Life of Trust*. George Mueller of Bristol (1805 – 1898) is a well-known figure

[75] Jeremy Chambers and Monica Paredes Chambers, 159.
[76] In my private conversation with him in 2023.

in the evangelical world and someone whom I have been familiar with from my Gordon-Conwell days more than 30 years ago. Some parts of his autobiography were not surprising, such as the orphanages that he led that were supported throughout by prayer alone – that is, he or his co-workers never asked for donations. But there were some aspects of his life that opened my eyes in remarkable ways.

The first surprising thing from Mueller's autobiography is the centrality of the word of God in his life. This was not the case in the first four years of his Christian life. He writes[77]: "I practically preferred, for the first four years of my divine life, the works of uninspired men to the oracles of the living God. The consequence was, that I remained a babe, both in knowledge and grace." But then something remarkable happened. As he became committed to doing a mission work among the Jewish in England, he became ill. He writes: "The weaker I became in body, the happier I was in spirit…It was as if every sin of which I had been guilty was brought to my remembrance; but at the same time I could realize that all my sins were completely forgiven."[78]This was then be followed by these words: "It was at this time that God began to show me that his word alone is our standard of judgment in spiritual things; that it can be explained only by the Holy Spirit; and that in our day, as well as in former times, he is the teacher of his people."[79]This was a life-changing realization that set the course of his life in a new direction, as he delved into the word of God like never before. He writes:

> The result of this was, that the first evening that I shut myself into my room, to give myself to prayer and meditation over the Scriptures (laying aside commentaries and almost every other book), I learned more in a few hours than I had done during a period of several months previously. But the particular difference was, that I received real strength for my soul in doing so.

[77] George Mueller, *The Life of Trust* (Victoria BC: Rare Treasures, 1861), 40.
[78] George Mueller, 46.
[79] George Mueller, 48.

George Mueller was so impacted by the word of God that he would liken this change to a second conversion.[80]And later, he came to call the mission society that he and his friend founded in Bristol[81] The Scriptural Knowledge Institution.

The second revealing thing about George Mueller's life is heart for the lost. Even though he is known best for his orphanages, he was, first of all, an evangelist, a preacher and a missionary.[82]His heart for the lost was evident from the time of his conversion.[83]And this heart, practice and vocation continued throughout his life until the very end. Not that he was number or success oriented, but he always kept track of the number of conversions out of those who have been added to their fellowship.[84]

Regardless of the reasons that launched the orphanages in Bristol,[85]this ministry became a channel through which George Mueller clung to God, abiding in Him in prayer as the branches abide in the vine. It's hard to imagine how many needs there must have been for these orphanages, which had up to 1500 children. Once the orphanages began, it seems that much of his autobiography is taken up by the detailed accounts of how God met the material needs by answering his and his co-workers' prayers. It is simply amazing how much he clung to God, and he truly glorified God by proving God's faithfulness every single time.

In Chapter 2, I talked about WPW as the fuel that the Christian needs to overcome the flesh, the gravity of sin, in order to come into the spiritual orbit. George Mueller was a wonderful example of a Christian who embodied WPW, and that is why his life was so powerfully lived out

[80] George Mueller, 49.
[81] George Mueller, 89.
[82] George Mueller, *The Life of Trust* (Victoria BC: Rare Treasures, 1861), 53.
[83] George Mueller, 35.
[84] George Mueller, 98.
[85] George Mueller, 110.

for God. And I do not think that it's a coincidence that he became so fond of the Hebrew language and that his love for it continued.[86]When he was interested in going to London as a missionary to the Jews as a fairly young Christian, his interest in the Hebrew language also grew. He writes:[87]

> About this time, also, I became exceedingly fond of the Hebrew language, which I had cared about very little up to that time, and which I had merely studied now and then, from a sense of duty. But now I studied it, for many weeks, with the greatest eagerness and delight.

Even though where he would go as a missionary remained uncertain, he wrote, "My earnestness in studying Hebrew, and my particular love for it, however, continued."[88]At the end of his life, George Mueller looked back and said that for the first four years after his conversion, his Christian life was one of weakness, but then at age 24, his life became one of complete surrender to Christ.[89]He also said that he became "a great lover of the Word of God."[90]And it was about this time, he spent many hours meditating on the word of God, much in Hebrew. He writes:[91] "I now studied much, about 12 hours a day, chiefly Hebrew…[and] committed portions of the Hebrew Old Testament to memory; and this I did with prayer, often falling on my knees…" For George Mueller, there was a strong correlation between his love for the word of God and his life of surrender; and furthermore, I believe that there was also a strong parallel between his love for the word of God and his love for the Hebrew language.

In this chapter, I have engaged some important books, both contemporary and classic, that examine the objective of this thesis-project. Given the primacy of the word of God in

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[86] George Mueller, 42.
[87] George Mueller, 41.
[88] George Mueller, *The Life of Trust* (Victoria BC: Rare Treasures, 1861), 42.
[89] J. Gilchrist Lawson, *Deeper Experiences of Famous Christians* (Lawton, OK: Trumpet Press, 2022), 231.
[90] J. Gilchrist Lawson, 231.
[91] George Mueller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Mueller* (London: J. Nisbet & Co, 1873), Kindle – 5%.

spiritual formation,[92]there is an important place that is reserved for the original languages. This is supported by the first three books that deal with the important role of the Hebrew language. Since learning the original languages is not an end itself but is meant to facilitate spiritual formation, five books that I covered pertain to the different vehicles of spiritual formation – the word of God, prayer and witnessing. Unfortunately, *The Art of Missional Spirituality* does not deal with the role of witnessing as much as I expected. Perhaps this is an indication of the deemphasis of the role of witnessing in spiritual formation in today's world. The last book, the autobiography of George Mueller, is an important book that includes all the elements of spiritual formation in an individual Christian. This spiritual giant, whose book was a blessing to read, was also an avid student of the Hebrew language. I discovered this fact in the course of this thesis-project, and it served to encourage me in this endeavor.

In Chapter 4, the nuts and bolts of this thesis-project will be discussed including the transcripts of five of the fifteen Hebrew Bible studies that were taught, and the survey results from the twenty-three participants regarding how the Hebrew Bible studies have facilitated their spiritual formation.

[92] David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 51.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN: SAMPLE HEBREW BIBLE STUDIES, SURVEY RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, there were 23 participants from Frontier Baptist Church (FBC) in Fairbanks, Alaska. FBC is one of the mission churches in our church network. Unfortunately, one of participants dropped out because of personal reasons in the middle of the thesis-project, making the total to 22. A total of 15 Hebrew Bible studies were given starting from January 14, 2023. The first six Bible studies were done in person. In the latter part of March of 2023, however, I had to go to our church's prayer and mission center, Katie Prayer and Mission House (KPMH), in Korea because of my wife's health. Therefore, six Bible studies until May 19, 2023, were conducted via Zoom from Korea. Then the summer came around when many of the participants traveled, so three more Bible studies were done via Zoom recording. The 15th and the final Bible study was recorded on August 12, 2023, and was listened to by the participants together on August 26, 2023.

In addition to the 15 Hebrew Bible studies, the Hebrew language lessons were given five times in person at the beginning of this year. In particular, on February 24th and 25th, I went over the entire elementary Hebrew grammar with the participants. I also tried to explain some Hebrew grammar in Bible studies whenever it was helpful and relevant.

In the first section of this chapter, I have chosen the transcripts of five Hebrew Bible studies out of the 15 to give a flavor of what was taught for this thesis-project. The Bible studies typically lasted one and half hours.

Five Sample Hebrew Bible Studies

Joshua 2:18, Psalm 1:2-4 (January 22, 2023)

This Bible study was one of the first Hebrew Bible studies that were taught for this project. Since I was still in the process of going over the basics of the Hebrew grammar, I chose just a few verses. The Hebrew interlinear text for these verses were given to all the participants. Below is the transcript of this Bible study.[1]

> In the genealogy of Jesus that is given in Matthew Chapter 1, five women are mentioned. One of them is Rahab. She was from Jericho, the first city that was destroyed in the Canaan conquest. Joshua 6:17 reads, "And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction…" In other words, Jericho was a hopeless city. In addition, Rahab was a prostitute…How hopeless can it get?
>
> But we know what happens in Joshua Chapter 2. Joshua sent two spies to check out Jericho, and they came into the house of Rahab, who was living in the city wall. Instead of reporting them to the king and receiving a reward, she does something unexpected. She hides the spies. Why do you think so? It says in Joshua 2:8-11 that Rahab heard about what the Lord God had done for the people of Israel in bringing them out of Egypt and in leading them through the wilderness. Not only does she say that the fear of the Lord has fallen upon the people of Jericho, but also that the Lord God is "God in the heavens above and on the earth below." Instead of trying to obtain some kind of reward from her hopeless world, something amazing happens. She finds hope in the Lord God. And for this hope, she is willing to do anything including hiding the spies.
>
> Let's read Joshua 2:18 in Hebrew. Please read after me. Even though we may not understand everything that we are reading, please follow. In Hebrew, unlike in Greek, it's important to read aloud because reading aloud helps us to learn the language better. We read *eṯ-tiqwaṯ ḥûṭ haššānî*…this is "the scarlet cord." The nominative form of this phrase (construct chain) is *tiqwaṯ ḥûṭ haššānî* without the direct object marker *eṯ-*. Rahab is told to tie this scarlet cord in the window through which she let the spies down, and whoever is in the house will be spared when the Israelites conquer Jericho. The amazing thing here is that the word for "cord" *tiqwāh* makes into the Hebrew vocabulary as the word "hope." And this is the first occurrence of this word in the Old Testament. I believe that the etymology of the word *tiqwāh* as "hope" comes from this remarkable narrative of Rahab, who, out of her hopelessness, boldly clung to the Lord God as her true hope even at the cost of handing over her country.
>
> It does not take much creativity to see the significance of the fact that the cord was red. Just as we are saved through the blood of Jesus, the red cord spared the lives of all of Rahab's household who were in the house. It makes sense that the red cord, which then

[1] I taught from notes, so this transcript was recreated based on my notes and those of a participant.

symbolized the blood of Jesus, was Rahab's only hope, just as the blood of Jesus is the sinner's only hope. Furthermore, just as Rahab remarkably came to be included in the genealogy of Jesus, we who hope in the blood of Jesus are remarkably included in Him.

Let me also talk about Rahab's name. The root of her name *rāḥāḇ* is *rḥb.* This root appears in Qal, Niphal and Hiphil stems, and in all these stems, the notion of "to be wide" is described.[2]The root of the word for "Spirit" *rwûḥ(a) is rwḥ,* which also has the notion of "to extend" or "to be wide, spacious" in Pual. In other words, these two roots are related in meaning. In addition, from my own engagement with Hebrew, I have noticed that names often have a tendency to use acronyms or a combination of words. That is, Rahab *rāḥāḇ* may be a combination of *rḥ* and *b*, where *rḥ* is short for *rwḥ* and *b* stands for either of the two familiar words *bayiṯ* "house" or the preposition *bĕ* "in". The former would have the meaning "Spirit – house," and the latter "Spirit – in." To be more fluid, the name Rahab may mean "a work of the Spirit for the house" or "a work of the Spirit within." Both of these meanings certainly fit the context of Joshua Chapter 2. As Rahab feared God and placed all her hope in the Lord God of Israel, she averted a disaster for the Israelite army by hiding the two spies. Her bold step of faith truly brought about a work of the Spirit that led to the first victory in the Canaan Conquest. And this all started from her own transformation upon hearing about what the Lord God had done – a work of the Spirit within Rahab.

Let me go over a couple verses from Psalm 1. In verse 2, the word for "meditate" is *hgh.* This root has a couple meanings. First, it's the word that applies to cows regurgitating food in the process of digestion. Second, it means "to mutter, groan, share and proclaim." We should first digest the word of God; then it should not stay with us only, but also to share with others. In verse 3, the word for "planted" is *šātûl* from the root *štl.* According to BDB, this root in Qal means "to transplant." It's a tree that has been transplanted. As Christians, we have been transplanted out of the kingdom of darkness and planted in the kingdom of light through repentance. The Hebrew for "Streams of water" in verse 3 is *'al palgê mayim.* According to BDB, *peleḡ* means "channel or canal," as in "irrigating canals from river."[3]Amy Carmichael in her devotional book *Whispers of His Power*[4] says that the river here refers to the river in Revelation 22:1, which is a description of the Holy Spirit. She also says that prayer will open up this irrigation canal so that perhaps by pushing away something that was closing it up, the canal might widen a little more, and the result is that we will be refreshed at the root. The goal is for us to obey the word of God, but sometimes, we are weak, so in our weakness, we should fall on our knees and pray. The Holy Spirit can then refresh us and strengthen us so that we can obey. But what is the overarching purpose in all this? It is to bear fruit in season. A fruitful tree whose leaf does not wither is a healthy tree. It is interesting that the Hebrew root for "wither" here is *nbl*, which also means "to be foolish." This root is behind the name Nabal, Abigail's husband in 1 Samuel Chapter 25. Therefore, a person who is like a tree whose

[2] Ludwig Kohler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament, Volume 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1211.
[3] Francis Brown et al, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 1958.*
[4] Amy Carmichael, *Whispers of His Power (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 1982),* 365.

> leaf does not wither is a person who is full of wisdom. This is spiritual formation – to be fruitful and healthy spiritually. And this is the purpose of these Hebrew Bible studies.

In this Bible study, I also went over some grammar. I covered definite article, the three inseparable prepositions, pronomial suffixes and independent pronouns.

Genesis 12:1-9 (February 4, 2023)

Before I began the Bible study, I went over some Hebrew grammar. In particular, I covered adjectives, especially about the attributive and predicative use of adjectives. The Hebrew interlinear text of Genesis 12:1-9 was given to the participants before the Bible study. Below is the transcript of this Bible study.[5]

> As we read verse 1, we hear *kā* a lot. As we know, this is the 2ms pronomial suffix. In this famous verse, the Lord said to Abram, "Go," but it was more than just that. It was *lek-lĕkā*. Gordon Wenham in his commentary on Genesis[6]says that this is an ethical dative construction, which should be translated "by yourself." Accordingly, God was commanding Abram to go from his country, his kindred and his father's household by himself. That is always God's call. God calls us one-on-one. Our relationship with God always involves our obedience to Him by ourselves. Of course, none of us was born into this world by ourselves. We were born into a family, and throughout our life, most of us are surrounded by people including church. It seems a bit counterintuitive because in our life from the beginning all the way to this point, we are not alone. But when God calls us, it is always by ourselves. Jesus died for us on the cross. At the Garden of Gethsemane before the cross, Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. He brought his closest disciples with Him – Peter, James and John – but they could not stay with Him. He left the three and went away a stone's throw, and then He fell on the ground and began to call upon His Father. Why did Jesus leave the three closest people in His life behind? Because at the Garden of Gethsemane, He wanted to be alone…so that He can meet us one-on-one on the cross. That's what salvation is – when we put aside everything and everyone else and in obedience to God's command, we go by ourselves to meet God.
>
> In addition, *lĕkā* means "to yourself" or "for yourself," according to the meaning of the preposition *lĕ*. What does it mean "go to yourself"? It means to go to the things in your life which you need to reorganize and surrender. In this case, *lek-lĕkā* is a command that requires much searching. Oswald Chambers said that we are who we are in the

[5] I taught from notes, so this transcript was recreated based on my notes and those of a participant.
[6] Gordon Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol.1: Genesis 1 – 15, edited by David Hubbard et al.* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 266.

dark…when we are by ourselves with our own thoughts. All the others are just a reputation. God is not interested in the scaffolding in our life. God is interested in who we really are. "Wherever you need to go, go! To reorganize, to let go and ultimately, to surrender" so that we can obey God. (Speaking to high school students who will be going away for college) Even when you go to college, you have to go by yourself. You need to become independent of certain relationships. How much more when it comes to God. If we want to encounter God, we have to surrender everything to God.

As I mentioned, *lĕkā* also means "for yourself." When we obey the word of God, we are doing what's best for ourselves and actually for everyone else as well. Our act of obedience brings about not only our best, but the best of everyone in the long run too. Some may not be pleased, but it is for their good too. That is the power of obedience.

As you can see, one prepositional phrase carries a lot of meanings. Our relationship with God is that unique…that special. It's above and beyond anything or anyone else. That is why in order to meet Him, we need to leave everything that He commands us to leave. The purpose of our life is to ultimately to have this kind of one-on-one relationship with God…to worship God. When we take one step towards God, He takes a thousand steps towards us. But why does God want us to leave things behind in order to go to the place that He will show us? Why can't we take everything? Some people think that God is just into having us give up things, but that is a total misconception. Our God is inherently good, and His love is manifested in everything that He does and says. For Abram, it was very important for him to leave Ur of Chaldea and to leave Haran. Haran was a real happening place in those days because it was a place of prosperity, where all roads met. But it was also a place of wicked idolatry, and that is why God wanted him to leave. As long as we are stuck in such a place, how can we go to the place that God wants us to go?

There are also reasons that we do not fully understand at the time. God's plan was to start a new nation in a new land through Abram and Sarai. And this was the reason that God wanted Abram to leave his kindred and his father's household. This may have to do with humanism. It was because of who God is and what He has in store for us that we have to leave certain things behind, even if that may seem drastic – comfort zones, wicked surroundings and even humanistic relationships. God is not against us having good things. We recently saw the movie *The Ultimate Gift*. The main character had to go through what he had to go through in order to be prepared to receive the great inheritance. God wants us to leave certain things behind so that we can be prepared to receive these greater rewards that God has in store for us.

Verse 2 contains all the promises that God had in store for Abram. Let's read verse 2 together in Hebrew. This verse contains three promises that are expressed in terms of what God will do for Abram. The first is "I will make of you a great nation. For a childless couple, the promise of a nation seems far-fetched, but it shows the power and the greatness of God's promises. Nothing is impossible for God. The second is "I will bless you." The Hebrew root for "to bless" is *brk.* In Qal, this root means "to kneel down." And in Piel stem, this root takes the meaning of "to bless." One of the

implications of the Piel stem is factitive[7] – that is, the causative of the roots that are stative or intransitive. In other words, to bless is cause someone to kneel down continually. God's promise to Abram then is to transform him to be a man of prayer, a man who calls upon the name of the Lord. This is what true blessing is. God does bless Abram materially so that he becomes a wealthy man (Genesis 24:35), but more importantly, God blesses Abram spiritually so that he becomes a person who is humbly dependent on God in prayer.

The third promise that God gives is "I will make your name great." When an angel appeared to Zechariah to announce the birth of John the Baptist, he said that John "will be great before the Lord." This is a formidable promise because God was saying that He will transform Abram to be someone who is great before the Lord. Our God is God of hope. He knows where we are right now, but He also sees what He wants us to become, and to that end, He chisels us, as Michaelangelo did in order to make the statue of David, so that we can glorify Him. [Because of time, I somehow did not cover the last part of verse 3. The last promise is actually not a promise, but a command. English translations opt for a future promise concerning Abram. ESV, for example, says, "…so that you will be a blessing." There is a scholarly debate about this, but I would go with John Walvoord's Bible Knowledge Commentary and translate it as it is – that is, as an imperative. The translation then is "…be a blessing." After the three awesome promises, Abram's responsibility to be a blessing is given. He needs to work out God's blessings with fear and trembling.]

Let's read verse 3 in Hebrew. "I will bless those who bless you." For the word *měqallelěkā,* the root is *qll*, from which we get the etymology for Qal stem. In Qal, the root means "to be light or slight." The word *měqallelěkā* contains the Piel participle of *qll* along with 2ms pronomial suffix. Once again, the Piel usage of *qll* is factitive, meaning "to belittle or to slight or to dishonor." But the word for curse *'rr* refers to God's eternal curse, just as He cursed the serpent in Genesis 3:14. This is an amazing statement. God will be with Abram to the extent that whoever blesses Abram will be blessed and whoever belittles Abram will be cursed. We know that God is just and fair no matter what, and His standard does not change, so this is not an emotional statement where God is proclaiming His allegiance. Rather, this is a testament to Abram's future transformation. Abram will be so one with God that to bless Abram will be to bless God, and to belittle Abram will be to belittle God. God wanted to change Abram that much. And this amazing promise too is accompanied by sobering responsibility.

In verse 3, it also reads, "All the clans of the earth will be blessed in you." How is this possible? Through the Messiah. In addition to all the promises that were already given, Abram would become the forefather of Jesus. These are mind-boggling promises of God. This kind of thing cannot come from our human mind. It's beyond our imagination. And this is why we should obey God like Abram. When we take one step towards Him, He takes a thousand steps towards us.

[7] C. L. Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 173.

Abram's obedience is nowhere better expressed than through a series of five waw consecutive verbs from verse 4 to 6 – *wayyēleḵ* "he went", *wayyēleḵ* "he went", *wayyiqqaḥ* "he took", *wayyēṣĕʾū* "they went out" and *wayyāḇōʾû* "they came". After the command-promise framework in verses 1-3, a narrative sequence using waw consecutive verbs begins in verse 4. This narrative sequence highlights Abram's obedience through a smooth prose, and it furthermore describes the fact that this was truly a work of the Spirit.

The narrative does not end here. Abram, at age 75, obeys the Lord and comes to Canaan in perhaps the biggest move of his life. But it is occupied by the Canaanites. How would you feel if you were in his place. I would think I would be a little perplexed, to say the least. But our God is a God who knows us, so in verse 7, He appears to him and says, "To your offspring I will give this land…" It says in Hebrews 11:13 that "these all died in faith, not having received what was promised." What is important is faith – trusting God no matter what the circumstances are. This land promise does not get fulfilled until the time of the Exodus when the Israelites leave and come to the promised land. According to the writer of the Hebrews, this promise will not be ultimately fulfilled until Jesus comes back and establishes the city that He has prepared for them. What does Abram do in this harsh reality? In verse 8, we read that he pitched a tent between Bethel and Ai, and there, he built an altar to the Lord. In other words, he called upon the name of the Lord and prayed. This is what faith is – trusting in God's mind-boggling promises and praying and waiting until His promises are fulfilled. This is why Abram was a man of faith, and he was able to glorify God, who is good and whose steadfast love endures forever.

Genesis 39: 1-2, 7-9, 21; 41:14-16; 42:1-2 (April 1, 2023)

Before the Bible study, the Hebrew interlinear text was given out. Below is the transcript of this Bible study.[8]

Let's read verse 1 together in Hebrew. Instead of beginning with a verb, the sentence begins with a noun. This is significant. Hebrew sentences usually have verb – subject – direct object structure, but here, it begins with the subject. There is, therefore, an emphasis in the person of Joseph. His name in Hebrew is *yôsēp̄*. The root is *ysp* "to increase". And *yôsēp̄* is the Hiphil jussive 3ms of the root *ysp* with the meaning "may He cause to increase" or "may He add." When Rachel named him Joseph in Genesis 30:24, she wanted God to add another son. But in God's sovereignty, I believe that his name came to reflect God's abundant grace, which He kept on adding in Joseph's life. What is ironic is that in Chapter 39, Joseph was beginning his life as a slave. From the earthly perspective, this is terrible, but from God's aerial perspective, God is about to cause His grace to increase in Joseph life in and through this terrible circumstance.

Here, I went over some grammar with regard to verse 2. There are two *wayĕhî* in this verse. Both of these are Qal waw consecutive 3ms of the root *hyh*. As I mentioned before,

[8] I taught from notes, so this transcript was recreated based on my notes and those of a participant.

the root *hyh* can have two meanings in Qal – "to be" or "to become." The key to interpretation is the context. The first *wayĕhî* has to mean "to be" resulting in "The Lord was with Joseph" because "The Lord became with Joseph" does not make sense theologically. The second *wayĕhî* is better translated, "And he became a *maṣlî(a)ḥ*" because he was not a *maṣlî(a)ḥ* from the beginning. In fact, it is a result of God's being with him.

What is *maṣlî(a)ḥ*? It is a Hiphil participle of the root *ṣlḥ* "to prosper." The meaning of the Hiphil stem is "to make prosperous." Amazingly, even in this terrible circumstance, Joseph became a person who caused others to be prosperous, and in verse 3, even Potiphar was able to see that. The source was none other than God, who caused His grace to increase in the midst of this horrible circumstance.
We studied Psalm 1:2-4 in one of our first Bible studies. The blessed man who meditates on the Law of the Lord day and night is also said to be *yaṣlî(a)ḥ.* This is Hiphil imperfect 3ms of *ṣlḥ*. ESV translates Psalm 1:3 as "In all that he does, he prospers." But since this is in Hiphil, a better translation is "In all that he does, he causes (others) to prosper." Basically, the description of the blessed man in Psalm 1 applies to Joseph. How did Joseph become a *maṣlî(a)ḥ*? I do not think it was a piece of cake…he could have given into his circumstances. He could have listened to his own voice and gone on a roller coaster ride with his emotions, but by the grace of God, he became like the blessed man in Psalm 1. By denying himself, he clung to God's word that was taught by his father Jacob and must have meditated on it day and night. I am assuming here that Jacob must have shared with Joseph, the beloved son, all that God had done in his life from Bethel to Jabbok. I do not think there is a secret to becoming a spiritual person. We have to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow Jesus. We have to cling to God and His word. This reminds me of the illustration of a swan. When you see a swan gliding on the surface of the water, it is a thing of beauty. But underneath the water, the swan is frantically pushing the water aside like a row boat. Graceful on the outside, working frantically underneath…this was Joseph.

Let's read verse 7 in Hebrew. We come to this phrase – *wayĕhî ʾaḥar haddĕḇārîm haʾēlleh.* ESV translates this "And after a time." This phrase is the same phrase that appears at the beginning of Genesis Chapter 22 right before God tests Abraham. There ESV translates it "After these things." As I noted in Chapter 2, a better and more literal translation of this phrase is "And it was after these words." The word *dāḇār* is translated as "word, thing or affair." But the root of this word *dbr* pertains to speaking, so *dāḇār* has to do with "word" with all of its implications. In Genesis Chapter 22, the phrase *wayĕhî ʾaḥar haddĕḇārîm haʾēlleh* introduces all that God has done through His word in Abraham's life, especially in the birth of Isaac and transforming Abraham even through his sins. In the same way, this phrase in verse 7 of Genesis Chapter 39 reminds us of all that God has done through His word in Joseph's life, especially His faithfulness in being with Joseph even though he was in Egypt as a slave so that he became a *maṣlî(a)ḥ.*

In the case of Abraham in Genesis Chapter 22, *wayĕhî ʾaḥar haddĕḇārîm haʾēlleh* set the stage for God's testing Abraham. But in the case of Joseph, this phrase set the stage for Satan's temptation. Whenever God is at work, Satan also raises his head. What was about

to take place in Joseph's life was not from God directly because we know from James 1:13 that "God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one." What was about to happen was Satan's attack. And we can learn from Joseph's example how to fight against temptations.

The Hebrew in verses 8 and 9 are straight forward. Let's read verse 9 in Hebrew. Joseph was a man who never wasted or forgot anything, especially when it comes to what had done in his life. Even though he was a slave, Potiphar held nothing back from him except for his wife because he saw that God was with him. And Joseph did not forget this amazing grace of God. He kept an account of everything that God had done in his life, and this is why he said, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" He never dropped God's grace on the ground, so God continue to add grace in Joseph's life.

Fighting a temptation involves not only what we say but also what we do. When Potiphar's wife approached Joseph, he ran away from her, becoming the fastest sprinter in history, perhaps faster than Usain Bolt. There is only one way to fight temptations, especially sexual temptations. As Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee from sexual temptation." The beautiful life of Joseph is also an example for us in how to fight temptations.

The consequence of Joseph's obedience was a misunderstanding and an accusation that led to his imprisonment. Although he fled from the temptation, he ended up at the lowest point of his life. Let's read verse 21 in Hebrew – *wayĕhî ʾăḏônāy ʾeṯ-yôsēp̄ wayyēṭ ʾēlāyw ḥāseḏ* (pausal form of *ḥēseḏ*). In Joseph's narrative, this is the first occurrence of the word *ḥēseḏ* - the word that describes the multi-faceted, eternal love of God. Some scholars call it God's covenantal faithfulness. It is the love of God that is described in Exodus 34:6-7 and Psalm 136 that is ultimately manifested on the cross of Jesus. What is amazing is that at the lowest point of his life, Joseph experienced the love of God the deepest. In the horrible dungeon, he discovered that God's grace was deeper still. I listened to Dr. Rebekah Kim's Bible study on Joseph many years ago[9], and I still remember what she said regarding Joseph's philosophy in life – nothing, no one, and no circumstance can sway our happiness when God is with us. This philosophy is what made Joseph one of the most beautiful people in the Bible.

Joseph spent about ten years in prison. It must have been a real trial of endurance, but even so, Joseph obeyed God and endured. Let's read 39:14. When God's time comes, it really, really quick. He had to run from the pit, shave, change clothes and appear before Pharaoh. When it is not God's time yet, we have to be patient and endure. At times, we have to wait because it is not God's time yet. God has a special plan for our waiting times. He wants to sanctify us so that we can experience His *ḥēseḏ* just as Joseph did.

The rest is history. Joseph became the prime minister of Egypt. More than that, after having interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he was able to prepare Egypt for the worst famine in their history thereby not only saving Egypt but also his own family. As he said to his brothers in Genesis 45:7-8, "And God sent me before you to preserve for you many

[9] I listened to her Bible study in 1994 or in 1995 when I was a pastor in LA.

survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God." Joseph's life was a powerful example of God's sovereignty. In addition, Joseph was an antitype of the suffering Messiah. Through his suffering, he became God's instrument for the salvation of His people. Even the Hebrew language gives evidence of this. Some Hebrew words are mostly unique to Joseph's narrative. In Genesis 42:1-2, for example, the word for grain is *šeḇer*. The word "to buy grain" is *šāḇar.* Both are from the root *šbr.* This is a familiar root that means "to break" in Qal and "to shatter" in Piel. But here in Joseph's narrative and in few other occurrences in the Bible, the meaning changes to "grain" or "to buy grain." We know that Jesus is the bread of life, whose body was broken for the sins of the world. Do you see the symbolism? Is not Hebrew an amazing language?

Numbers 13:1-2, 17-18 and 25-30 (April 13, 2023)

The Hebrew interlinear text for these verses were given out. Below is the transcript of this Bible study.[10]

The fact that the spies were sent out shows that this was a warfare…a spiritual warfare. And God's people by definition are God's army, soldiers in Christ. In verse 2, we see the independent personal pronoun *ʾănî*, which is used for emphasis – "I myself." It is then followed by the participle *nōṯēn.* ESV translates it "I am giving." A more precise translation would be "I myself am about to give." In other words, Canaan was a land that God himself was about to give to the people of Israel based on His promise to their forefathers. This brings forth a very different purpose for sending out the spies. The purpose of spying was not to discern whether Israel should take possession of the land or not. Rather, the purpose was to begin with the end in mind – that is, to see what the land was like in order to correctly envision and come to understand God's power that will be displayed in fulfilling this promise. If the people of Canaan were weak, then less power from God will be required. But if the people there were strong, then more power from God will be required, which meant that the people of Israel needed to cling to God in trust in obedience, not losing sight of Him.

The fact that the twelve spies were the heads of the tribes of Israel also signified that this was no ordinary spying. Their role as the leaders of Israel was to help the people of Israel digest what was about to happen, especially in terms of trusting and obeying God as He fights for them. The Hebrew root for "to spy" is *twr.* This root is not used that many times in the Old Testament. Besides the context of the 12 spies, this root is used in Numbers 10:33, Job 39:8, Ecclesiastes 7:25, Ezekiel 20:6 and, I believe, a couple more places. These uses imply intensive seeking and searching. In the case of Numbers 10:33 and Ezekiel 20:6, the root refers to God's search for a land that is most suitable for the people of Israel. The purpose of spying then was to be one with God, who has already searched out the best land and who, furthermore, was about to give that land to the people of Israel. This called for spiritual maturity on the part of the twelve spies and being able to see

[10] I taught from my extensive notes on this text. This transcript was recreated from my notes and memory.

from God's aerial view rather than the eye-level view. In other words, this called for the twelve spies to deny themselves, take up their crosses and follow God's leading. Through their example, they should have exhorted others to do the same. And this is the case even though the enemy was strong and their cities were fortified high. But at the end of forty days, the twelve spies, except for Joshua and Caleb, were more like the rabble rather than spiritually mature leaders.

In verse 27, they start out confirming the word of God. The adverb *gam* here can mean "indeed." Verse 27 reads, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It (indeed) flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit." But everything breaks loose in verse 28: "However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there." The word of "however" is *ʾepēṣ*, which literally means "end." What the spies were actually saying was "at the end of the day" or "the bottom line is." They were overwhelmed by what they saw including the Nephilim, who might have looked like Goliath. But this was the very reason for the Canaanite conquest – to judge the iniquity of the Amorites (Genesis 15:16). Christ came to destroy the work of Satan according to 1 John 3:8, and we as his disciples are called to do the same in our spiritual warfare, so we should not be discouraged by the giants in our lives. In fact, it is a call to rise up courageously. The leaders of Israel were supposed to be different from the rabble in Numbers 11, but they were even worse. As a result, the Israelites could not enter the promised land for forty years, and none of that generation would make it except Caleb and Joshua. How about us? Has God called us to spy on what He wants to accomplish in our life? What kind of report will we give?

I would like to make a couple more points from this text. The twelve spies gave this horrible report after 40 days. The number 40 is a perfect number in the Old Testament that symbolizes one generation. At the end of our life, what kind of report do you think you will give for the next generation? Would you encourage and exhort them to wholeheartedly follow God and trust Him all the way because you are able to see God's goodness and love and because you are able to see from God's perspective despite all the adversities? Or would you discourage and bring a bad report saying that it is too much and that the reality is too daunting and scary despite God's promises? I am sure that you all do not want to follow the example of the ten spies. This means we need to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily and follow him and to cling to the power of the cross when life becomes seemingly impossible because that is how we will be able to see things from God's aerial view. How we live our lives has value not only for this age but also the age to come according to 1 Timothy 4:8. Let's read this verse together: "…for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Finally, it says in verse 30 that Caleb was different. His name in Hebrew is *kālēḇ.* If you ask a Jewish person who knows Hebrew what Caleb means, he or she will tell you that the name means "dog" since *kālēḇ* is similar to the Hebrew word for "dog" *keleḇ*. I would now like to suggest my own contributions to the meaning of the name Caleb. When I initially saw this name in Hebrew *kālēḇ*, what came to my mind were two words – *kol* meaning "all" and *lēḇ* meaning "heart." Since names often combine different words

together without always following the grammatical convention, and since the names can even be acronyms as Genesis Chapters 29 and 30 show, I would like to suggest that one possible meaning of *kālēḇ* is "all heart." That is, one who follows the Lord with all of his heart.

In addition, *kālēḇ* could also be a combination of two words – *kĕ* meaning "according to or after" and *lēḇ* meaning "heart." Here, the meaning of the combination of these two words would be "according to or after heart." That is, one who follows the Lord after His heart. Either way, Caleb was a man who was filled with God, so unlike the ten spies, he was not daunted by what he saw with his physical eyes, but rather, he was filled with the word of God and what God was able to do through those who were obedient. He was richly rewarded for his faith as only he and Joshua were able to enter the promised land among his whole generation. We should be like Caleb. What is your heart filled with? After whom or what, is your heart chasing after? Let's pray.

Psalm 23 (July 9, 2023)

The interlinear Hebrew text of Psalm 23 was handed out. Below is the transcript of this Bible study.[11]

Verse 1 starts with the sentence *ʾădōnāy rōʿî*. Even though there is no verb in Hebrew, this is translated as "The Lord is my shepherd." This is an example of a verbless clause in Hebrew. I believe there is power in brevity. In saying *ʾădōnāy rōʿî*, the two words stand side by side – that is, my shepherd is none other than *ʾădōnāy*, the Lord God of this universe. This is an amazing thought, which we will come back to…

Of all the animals in the world, the Bible likens us to sheep. Sheep are the weakest of all animals. This is well described in Philip Keller's book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23.* Even one nasal fly can make them lose weight because of worries and fears, and relational issues among them can incapacitate them. We are this much weak…on our own. We were not meant to live our lives on our own. We were meant to live in the presence of the Good Shepherd – in total dependence and trust.

Certainly when we were born into this world, we were weak, utterly depending on our moms; and when a person leaves this world, he or she usually becomes helpless and weak…like Enosh. The problem is in between. From youth, our hearts become stubborn, hardened because of all the rocks and weeds. The rocks and weeds from the parable of the four soils represent the works of the enemy through our sins. This is why life is doubly impossible if we try to live our lives on our own. First of all, we were not meant to do that, and secondly, we have the problem of sin. Through repentance, we need to confess – each and every one of us – that *ʾădōnāy* is my Shepherd. And to live our lives in complete dependence on our Shepherd.

[11] I taught from notes, so this transcript was recreated based on my notes and those of a participant.

This is an awesome proclamation – *ʾădōnāy* is my Shepherd. As I mentioned *ʾădōnāy* is the Good Shepherd, who came to lay down His life for His sheep. When Gabriel appeared to Joseph in Matthew Chapter 1, he said, "…you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." That is what the very name of Jesus means – salvation from sins.

King David's confession was that with *ʾădōnāy* as his Shepherd, he shall not want. This is a powerful testimony. When *ʾădōnāy* is our Shepherd, can you think of any problem that He cannot solve? Do you feel too weak at times? According to Isaiah 9:6, He is mighty God. He is the Almighty God, who created this universe by the power of His word. If I am weak, that is ok. I am weak, but when *ʾădōnāy* is my Shepherd, I can be strong in Him. Am I worried about the future? With our Shepherd, the future is like the past, and the past is like the future because He is everlasting Father, so we do not have to worry about our future. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow, so we should think about how to live correctly before God today. Do you feel like you cannot experience peace in your heart no matter what you do? He is Prince of Peace. Peace does not come just because we try to be peaceful. We can have peace only when we rest on Him because He Himself is Prince of Peace. Ultimately, what robs us of peace is sin, but if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and forgives us and purifies us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Therefore, even sin cannot be a hindrance because our Shepherd has solved that most difficult problem on the cross. No wonder King David was able to testify these powerful words, "*ʾădōnāy* is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

The first part of verse 2 is fairly straight forward. "He makes me lie down in green pastures." If we were to translate it more literally, "He causes me to lie down in green pastures." Lying down in green pastures is a picture of rest. What King David was saying is that *ʾădōnāy* is the source of our rest, the cause of our rest. David describes the relationship between Shepherd and the sheep as rest- the rest that comes from trust.

The second part of verse 2 reads: *ʿal-mê mĕnûḥôṯ*. The preposition *ʿal* means "to, over, on, upon," but not "beside." If *ʿal-mê mĕnûḥôṯ* is translated, "He leads me beside still waters," then there is really no difference between that statement and the previous statement, "He makes me lie down in green pastures," since both seem to paint a picture of rest. But to translate *ʿal-mê mĕnûḥôṯ* as "to still waters" or "upon still waters," the meaning changes. Through our Shepherd, we have peace with God. That is an unchangeable fact. But through the vicissitudes of life and our own sins, we need to renew and strengthen our trust in the Lord each day. The Good Shepherd will lead us upon still waters, but it is our responsibility to drink that water. What is this water that gives us rest? Jesus says in John 7:37-38, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" Jesus was actually talking about the Holy Spirit. As Apostle Paul said, we need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We know that Apostle Paul did not mean a one-time filling, but a continual filling with the Holy Spirit. I believe that that is what King David was talking about in the second part of verse 2.

In verse 3, the first word that appears is *napšî* or "my soul." Since the lexical form of that word *nepeš* is a direct object here, it should not be at the beginning of a sentence. But since it is, defying the grammatical convention, we know that there is a special emphasis on the word "soul" – that is, the soul is the issue in our spiritual life. *napšî yĕšôḇēḇ* - ESV translates this "He restores my soul." This is a good translation, but how does our Shepherd restore my soul? Let's analyze the verb *yĕšôḇēḇ*.

This verb is Polel imperfect 3ms from the root *šwb*. When it comes to verbs that have *wāw* as the second letter of the root, Polel often assumes the function of Piel.[12] We learned that Piel is the intensive form of Qal stem, but actually there are other connotations of the Piel stem, and one of them is factitive. Factitive implies causative resulting in stative. For example, let's suppose that in Qal, a verb means "to be bold." In factitive, the verb changes the meaning to "to embolden." Since the primary meaning of the root *šwb* in the Old Testament is "to repent," I would translate *napšî yĕšôḇēḇ* as "He causes my soul to be in the state of repentance." Sanctification is tantamount to the restoration of our soul. The way that we think, the way that we make decisions and even our emotions have much residue from our life before Christ. And the way that our Shepherd sanctifies us is by causing us to be in the state of repentance.
Once a person repents and is born again, Jesus becomes his or her Shepherd. But what verse 3 is trying to say is that it is only the beginning. It is only the beginning because the problem is my soul. The problem is the way we think, which does not change overnight even when a person is born again. Not only my mind, but also my emotions…these do not change overnight. It takes time…Our emotional baggage is not resolved in a second. And in order for God to restore us, we have to have the right kind of attitude. This is why a stative verb was used to describe our attitude. This is what David meant in Psalm 51 after he repented, "The sacrifice of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite spirit you will not despise." This is the state of repentance – having a humble and teachable attitude.

When I first read Psalm 23, I read "He restores my soul" as a concluding statement to "He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters." But the Masorites, the editors of the Old Testament, insisted that the verse 2 should end as a thought unit by placing *sôp̄ pāsûq*, the marker that signifies the end of a verse, at the end of verse 2. In other words, verse 3 begins a new thought pertaining to our sanctification.

Because of the time limitation, I am going to cover just three more points from Psalm 23. Verse 3 continues, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The Hebrew word for "path" is *maʿgāl*. In the old days, the roads were mostly dirt roads, and the caravan wagons would make tracks on the road. The grooves that resulted from repeated actions are *maʿgĕlîm*, the plural form of *maʿgāl.* Here, King David is talking about paths of righteousness, but I think we should start from paths of unrighteousness. I am talking about all the bad habits that we have in thinking and in practice. Why do you think some people cannot let go of alcohol? Because these grooves of intoxication are set in their minds. With the help of God's word and His Spirit, we need to undo these

[12] C. L. Seow, 328.

grooves of unrighteousness by having an attitude of repentance and set in place the grooves of righteousness in our minds and in our bodies. Scripture Union began among children. Through the practice of asking "What is God like?" and "What is the lesson of the day?" with their respective applications, this devotion practice was intended to train young people by setting these paths of righteousness in their minds. I heard that many pastors and missionaries were raised among the children of the village where Scripture Union had begun. And more than one hundred years later, our church is blessed as we use this devotional guide.

Verse 4 reads, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death…" "Even though" implies that it does not always happen. But the Hebrew for this conjuction is *gam kî*. In general, *kî* means "when." *gam* can mean "also, even," but it can also mean "surely." I would go with the translation "Surely when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death…" In other words, when we are serious about following our Shepherd in paths of righteousness – that is, when we are committed to being trained by our Shepherd in setting these grooves of righteousness in our minds and in our lives – spiritual warfare is bound to follow. Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12, "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Nevertheless, we do not need to fear the enemy because God is with us, and His rod and His staff, they comfort us. The rod and the staff represent God's instruments that can strengthen and comfort us against the schemes of the enemy such as the word of God, prayer and the people of God. We can be strong and courageous because God himself will be with us, and He will never leave us or forsake us. We will experience victory over the enemy and experience God's goodness and love deeply and abundantly if we just cling to our Shepherd all the way.
Finally, I want to close by talking about the last sentence of Psalm 23. It reads, "…and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The Hebrew word for "dwell" is *wĕšaḇtî.* When we parse *wĕšaḇtî*, it is waw consecutive Qal perfect 3ms from the root *šwb.* This root never means "to dwell," but because of the Septuagint, which translated that verb as "to dwell," all the English versions that I know have opted for the translation. Perhaps it is also because the usual translation seems to make verse 6 smoother or perhaps more pleasant. Even in the Psalm commentaries that I am familiar with, only Allen Ross briefly mentions this.[13] I want to translate this verb as is, so the last sentence should read, "…and I will repent in the house of the Lord forever." The word for "forever" here is not eternity but rather literally "length of days," meaning for the rest of our earthly life. The translation that I will opt for then is, "…and I will repent in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

I believe there is a play on words here. *šaḇtî* can also be parsed Qal infinitive constructive 1cs of the root *yšb* meaning "to dwell". I believe that this is what the Septuagint has picked up on, but to opt for that instead of waw consecutive Qal perfect is certainly counterintuitive. But we can use that secondary parsing as a play on words of a sort. That is, "…and I shall repent (that I may dwell) in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." I have been in this church for some 33 years now, and this church is precious to me because of the way that God has worked in my life since I came to this church and because of the precious people that God has placed in my life through this church. But I

[13] Allen Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms*: Volume 1 (1 – 41) (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 554.

> am a person of strong and stubborn ego, not to mention other sinful things. For me to have come thus far and to become one in spirit with other brothers and sisters, I had to go through some chieseling. In other words, I had to go through repentance, so I can readily identify with the last sentence of Psalm 23 - "…and I shall repent (that I may dwell) in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

Questionnaires and Their Results

From the beginning of thesis-project, all the participants were asked to keep a personal journal during the span of the project so that they may not only take notes of the Bible studies, but also so that they may be able to see their own progress. This journal then would be the basis from which they can respond to the two questionnaires. The first questionnaire had already been given before the first Hebrew Bible study. The first questionnaire and its results are given in Chapter 1 of this thesis-project. The second questionnaire was given out on April 14, 2023, and all 22 participants submitted their responses mostly within a week. The answers to this questionnaire were based on the first eight Hebrew Bible studies. This midpoint questionnaire is given in the appendix A.

Question 1 dealt with Hebrew proficiency, and the participant was asked to write down their current proficiency along with where they were in the initial survey. Questions 2 – 4 pertained to the levels of increase in terms of desire and habits that the participants experienced as a result of their engagement with Hebrew Bible studies with regard to the word of God, prayer and witnessing (WPW). In other words, Questions 2 – 4 addressed the change that was brought about in the participant's desire and habits with regard to WPW.

The final questionnaire was initially given on October 1, 2023, but because of the busy schedule of the participants as well as my own busy traveling schedule, the responses were delayed. I thought it would be a good idea to have a final Zoom meeting (I was still in Korea) in order to officially conclude this project with the participants. As a result, we had a Zoom meeting

on November 17, 2023, in which I went over and clarified what was in the questionnaire. I also asked them to indicate what they put down in the midpoint questionnaire in parenthesis for Questions 1 – 4 so that I could see their progress, if any, from the time of the midpoint questionnaire. For Question 1, I also asked them to indicate what they put down in the first Questionnaire so that I could track the progress in their individual Hebrew proficiency. In addition, I went over the meaning of the Hebrew name "Job" since the participants were going through the book of Job for their churchwide devotion. All 22 responses were submitted within a few days after the Zoom meeting. The final questionnaire in its original form is given in the appendix A.

Hebrew Proficiency

The group results for Hebrew proficiency of the 22 participants during the span of the thesis-project are given in Figures 6 and 7. The three numbers indicate the averages of the results of the 22 participants for the three questionnaires that were given out. The numbers in the chart in Figure 7 are rounded off to the nearest tenth. These were then shown as columns in the graph in Figure 8. The scale that was used was as follows: 1 – not know the alphabet; 2 – know the alphabet and some grammar; 3 – very familiar with grammar including some knowledge of the verbal system; 4 – proficiency in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary; and 5 – able to sight read. Out of the 22, there were 2 who did not know the Hebrew alphabet before the project. Thankfully at the end of the thesis-project, they reached Level 2. There were 12 who went from Level 2 to Level 3. There were 2 who were at Level 3 at the beginning of the thesis-project, and they remained at the same level at the end of the thesis-project. And there were 4 who were at Level 2 at the beginning, who remained at the same level at the end. It was not

specifically asked whether the participant uses some form of interlinear Bible or Bible software regularly, but some have voluntarily mentioned the fact that they use the interlinear Bible website or Bible software on a regular basis or from time to time. Overall, there was a steady improvement over time. For those whose Hebrew proficiency did not improve during the thesis-project, a couple explanations perhaps can be given. First, because of where the majority of the participants were in terms of Hebrew proficiency, I believe I tried to go over the basics again and again. Second, it perhaps takes more repetitions and time in order for a language proficiency to improve substantially. It also goes without saying that any kind of improvement depends on the participant's work ethic as well.

	Initial	Midpoint	Final
Scale 1 - 5	2.1	2.6	2.8

Figure 6

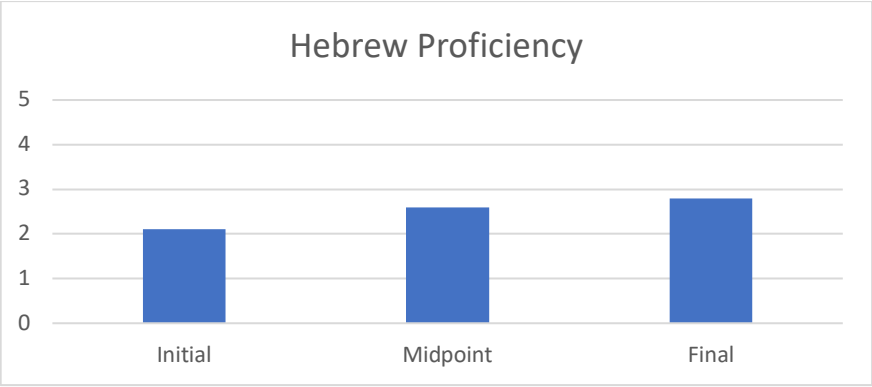

Figure 7

The Word of God

The second question in the midpoint questionnaire and in the final questionnaire pertains to the extent to which the Hebrew Bible studies have helped with the engagement with the word of God. More specifically, it asked, "Do you have a greater desire to read the word of God?" and "Has your habit of reading the word of God changed?" Once again, the scale of 1 – 5 was used with the following key: 1 – none; 2 – little; 3 – moderate; 4 – quite a lot; and 5 – great. It is important to note that unlike the question that pertains to Hebrew proficiency, this question (along with questions 3 – 5) attempts to quantitatively measure the change that was brought about by the Hebrew Bible studies.

Figure 8 is the table that gives the group averages for the change in the desire to read the word of God as well as for the change in the habit of reading the word of God. The numbers are rounded off to the nearest tenth. This then is graphically described in Figure 9.

	Desire	Habit
Midpoint	3.3	2.8
Final	3.8	3.4

Figure 8

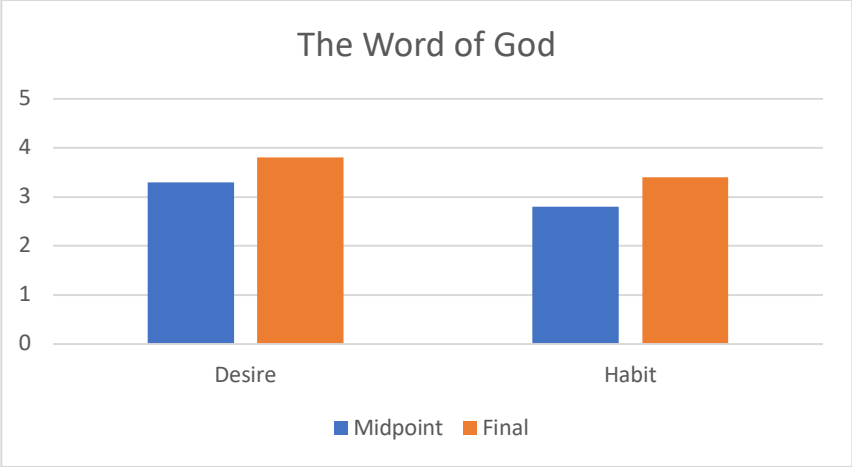

Figure 9

Regarding having a greater desire to read the word of God, the participants in the midpoint survey responded by saying that it became greater a little more than moderately, but thankfully in the final questionnaire, they responded that it became greater a little less than quite a lot (from 3.3 to 3.8). Having a greater desire to read and meditate on the word of God is the beginning of the process of spiritual formation as alluded to by M. Robert Mulholland Jr. and David Currie in Chapter 3 of this thesis-project. And thankfully teaching the Hebrew Bible studies have facilitated spiritual formation in the participants according to Figure 7 and Figure 8.

From my own experience in ministry over the years, I know that it is difficult to kindle a right kind of desire for God in believers' hearts as there are so many things in life that can do the opposite. I am, therefore, especially grateful that this thesis-project has helped to kindle the desire for the word of God in the hearts of the participants.

As expected, the change in the habit of reading of the word of God was less than the change in the desire to read the word of God. A change in habits requires setting the priorities and reorganizing one's life so that the desire that has been kindled becomes concrete in one's life. It also requires saying no to certain things and making the right choices to spend time wisely. In

other words, it requires self-discipline. In the midpoint questionnaire, the habit of reading the word of God as a result of the Hebrew Bible studies was only 2.8 by average. This meant that the change in habit was not even moderate. But thankfully, this improved in the second half as the number increased to 3.4 by average in the final questionnaire. This was the difference produced by the seven additional Hebrew Bible studies.

The midpoint questionnaire was given after eight Bible studies and after three months since the project began. This duration was not long enough for the habit to become substantial. It took a little more than seven months for the 15 Hebrew Bible studies to be taught to the participants, and the result for the habit of reading the word of God was 3.4 in the final questionnaire – between "moderate" and "quite a lot." As I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I was able to do only six of the 15 Hebrew Bible studies in person because of my wife's health. It makes me wonder if the result might have improved somewhat if all the Hebrew Bible studies were taught in person. More will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis-project.

One additional factor to consider in evaluating these data is the ceiling effect. If the change in desire and habits started out fairly high in the midpoint questionnaire, the progress in the final questionnaire will not be substantial, or at least, it will be difficult to measure in my 5-point scale. As I stated before, each participant in the final questionnaire was asked to write in parenthesis what number they put down in the midpoint questionnaire for each of the questions 1 – 4. This was for the purpose of analyzing individual data in addition to the aggregate data. For desire, among the participants who answered 3 or 4 in the midpoint questionnaire, 9 out of 21 made no progress in the final questionnaire. For habits, among the participants who answered at least 3 in the midpoint questionnaire, 10 of 14 made no progress in the final questionnaire. The

ceiling effect, consistent with what was discussed in the above paragraph, was more prevalent with habits. Even when the ceiling effect took place, however, Hebrew Bible study was at least able to sustain the desire and habits for the word of God among the participants.

Prayer

The second question in the midpoint questionnaire and the final questionnaire pertains to the extent to which the Hebrew Bible studies have helped with prayer. More specifically, it asked, “Do you have a greater desire to pray?” and “Has your habit of praying changed?” Once again, the scale of 1 – 5 was used with the following key: 1 – none; 2 – little; 3 – moderate; 4 – quite a lot; and 5 – great.

Figure 10 is the table that gives the group averages for the change in the desire to pray as well as for the change in the habit of praying. The numbers are rounded off to the nearest tenth. This then is graphically described in Figure 11.

	Desire	Habit
Midpoint	2.8	2.5
Final	3.5	2.9

Figure 10

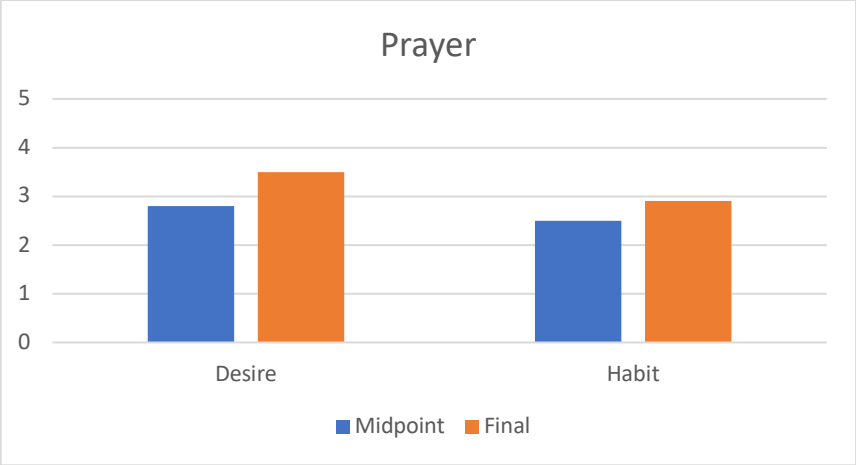

Figure 11

Compared to the word of God, the numbers for prayer were all lower. In the midpoint questionnaire, the desire to pray was greater only a little less than moderately (2.8). Thankfully, this improved to 3.5, between "moderate" and "quite a lot", in the final questionnaire. For the midpoint questionnaire, the habit of praying was changed midway between a little and moderately. Thankfully, this average too improved to 2.9, just a little shy of "moderate" in the final questionnaire. Nonetheless, out of the 22 participants, 13 have said that there was no progress in the change of the habit of praying from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire. And out of the 13, 6 remained at 2, while 7 remained at 3. This lack of progress can hardly be attributed to the ceiling effect since we are dealing with numbers that are "moderate" at best.

Although the result of the impact of the Hebrew Bible studies on prayer should not surprise us too much, it is sobering nonetheless. It is one thing for the Christian to habitually meditate on the word of God, but it is a more difficult task for him or her to habitually call on the name of the Lord in prayer. According to Matthew 6:5-6, prayer is true communion with the Lord one-on-one. One can read the Bible at Starbucks, but for most people, they need to be alone

before God in order to pray. One can also say that it takes someone with a good mind to read the Bible, but it takes someone with a childlike heart to pray.

Perhaps it is too early to make the case at this point in discussion, but having a greater desire to pray and changing the habit of praying just may be at the core of facilitating spiritual formation, as Dr. Rebekah Kim always says, "Prayer changes the pray-er."[14] "The pray-er" here is the one who prays. As can be seen from Figure 9 and Figure 10, there is much inertia to prayer because of our resourcefulness and the flesh, and we are prone to do anything else before we humble ourselves before our God and pray. Even though the participant may be inspired by the precious insights from the depth of God's word through Hebrew, having that inspiration to filter down to our knees takes a long time if it gets there at all, perhaps more time than is given by this thesis-project. According to Figure 9 and Figure 10, this resistance is especially true when it comes to developing the right kind of habit of praying through repeated practice and discipline.

Witnessing

The second question in the midpoint questionnaire and the final questionnaire pertains to the extent to which the Hebrew Bible studies have helped with witnessing. More specifically, it asked, "Do you have a greater desire to witness?" and "Has your habit of witnessing changed?" Once again, the scale of 1 – 5 was used with the following key: 1 – none; 2 – little; 3 – moderate; 4 – quite a lot; and 5 – great.

[14] To my memory, Dr. Rebekah Kim first coined this sentence in 2014 or in 2015 in her Bible study at our worldwide church gatherings.

Figure 12 is the table that gives the group averages for the change in the desire to witness as well as for the change in the habit of witnessing. The numbers are rounded off to the nearest tenth. This then is graphically described in Figure 13.

	Desire	Habit
Midpoint	2.7	2.1
Final	3.4	3.0

Figure 12

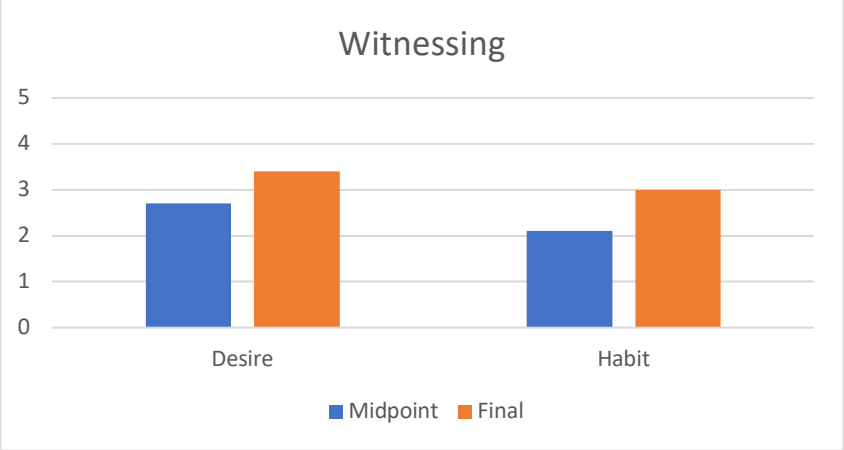

Figure 13

The numbers for witnessing are lower than those for the word of God as well. This too is somewhat expected because from my own observation of evangelical Christians in general, witnessing does not always take the forefront of their daily lives as they are occupied by so many things in today's world. Figure 11 and Figure 12 also show that most of these numbers are even

lower than those for prayer. But even so, there is a marked difference. For both the change in the desire to witness and the change in the habit of witnessing, there was a substantial progress from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire. For the change in the desire to witness, it went from 2.7 to 3.4 so that at the time of the final questionnaire, the participants' desire to witness became greater about midway between moderately and quite a lot.

The biggest progress was in the change in the habit of witnessing. For the midpoint questionnaire, the average was only 2.1 – that is, after listening to eight Hebrew Bible studies, the participants' habit of witnessing changed only a little. Just as it was discussed above regarding prayer, there is certain inertia regarding the habit of witnessing that takes time to overcome. I believe that this inertia includes one's own personality, skepticism that this will make a difference and one's own lifestyle.

Thankfully, this average number went up to 3.0 in the final questionnaire. This is the biggest midpoint-to-final progress among the six categories that we have discussed thus far (WPW with their respective desire and habits). Among the 22 participants, 13 put down a progress of 1 point in the 1-5 scale from the midpoint to the final questionnaire, and 3 put down a progress of more than one – 2 participants put down a progress of 2, and 1 participant put down a progress of 1.5. This is indeed an encouraging result. What this perhaps implies is that even though it takes time to overcome the inertia of witnessing, it certainly can be done. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis-project, supplemental evangelism training programs will be helpful in further encouraging the participants to change their habits of witnessing.

God-centered relationships

Question 5 was included only in the final questionnaire. It read, "How have the Hebrew Bible studies helped you towards God-centered relationships? Use the 1-5 scale above." The average among the 22 participants came out to 3.5. This was higher than expected since given the short-term nature of this thesis-project, I did not expect that the God-centered relationships among the participants will change too much. Even 2 participants noted that the Hebrew Bible studies helped them greatly towards God-centered relationships.

The result is encouraging for two reasons. First, it shows the importance of church in spiritual formation. As the participant is challenged by the depth of God's word through the Hebrew Bible studies, it should spur the participant to examine his or her spiritual formation. But how can the participant do this on his or her own when guidance, counsel, encouragement and even correction are needed? The push towards God-centered relationships then is a reflection of the participant's spiritual dependence, which is evidence that the Spirit is the one leading the participant. Second, God-centered relationships in the participant's life will encourage and challenge him or her to continue to grow spiritually through WPW long after this thesis-project is completed. They will provide the right kind of momentum in this world where most of the things will counter spiritual formation. It goes without saying that my heart is that the participants will continue in this endeavor indeed long after this thesis-project.

Concluding Remarks

I am grateful for the results of the questionnaires because the Hebrew Bible studies during the span of this thesis-project have facilitated spiritual formation among the 22 participants. The picture that emerges in my mind may be depicted as follows. The Hebrew Bible

studies are like a dryer that is blowing the hot air on something that is frozen for the purpose of thawing it. The object in question is something that is lengthy whose parts are linked together. Because of the location of the dryer, the front part gets thawed first and then the second part and so on. The front part is the desire to read and meditate on the word of God and the habit of reading and meditating on the word of God. This makes sense since teaching the Hebrew Bible studies is essentially teaching the word of God, so the part that is most directly affected is the desire to read the word of God and the habit of reading the word of God.

The second part that is thawed through the Hebrew Bible studies is prayer since the word of God and prayer are intimately related. The third part is witnessing. Since the Hebrew Bible studies covered the texts in the Old Testament, the contents of these Bible studies were one step removed from witnessing. The results of the questionnaires certainly confirm this picture. There is, however, one caveat in this picture. The second part of the lengthy object (prayer) is extra frozen at the core. Although it seemed initially that it will thaw before the third part, it turned out that because of the extent of its frozenness, the third part (witnessing) became thawed second. I believe this is a fitting illustration of what has been discussed thus far.

I want to discuss a couple sets of data in the two questionnaires. When I received the final questionnaire from one person by email, I looked through the responses, and I thought that that he had made a mistake. I noticed that the change in his habit of reading the word of God was higher than the change in the desire to read the word of God. This was different from everyone else's, so I thought that he had mistakenly switched the order. Even though these questionnaires are meant to be anonymous, I decided to ask him if indeed this was a mistake. He graciously replied saying that it was not a mistake; in fact, he had done the same in the midpoint questionnaire. He said that for him, desire comes after establishing the habit, so he tries to obey

first and practice. The desire to read the word then follows. Although I find this order a little bit unusual, this must be true for some, for whom discipline is easier than desire. Facilitating spiritual formation among believers calls for flexibility as everyone is different in their disposition and background, so the shepherds need to exercise wisdom and sensitivity in meeting the needs and the make-up of the sheep so that they can conform to the image of Christ.

In going over the data from the two questionnaires, I noticed that for one person, there was no change whatsoever from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire. For both the midpoint questionnaire and final questionnaire, his answers were all 3's, except for the change of habit for prayer and the change of habit for witnessing. These were all 2's. Even for question 5 regarding God-centered relationships, that person's answer was 2, which meant that the Hebrew Bible studies helped a little towards God-centered relationships. I am not sure exactly what I could have done more, as there might be various reasons for his stagnancy, but perhaps I could have offered some private office hours for those for whom the Hebrew Bible studies were not helping that much. This does call for some sober reflection since this thesis-project did not seem to help that person that much, and furthermore, his numbers also dragged down the group averages for WPW as well. I am not saying that the numbers are important in themselves, but that the stagnancy of one person can affect the spiritual vibrancy of the whole group.

In the next and final section of this chapter, the testimonies of five of the participants are included. There were two criteria for choosing these five participants. The first is that I wanted them to represent the age make-up of the group. The second is somewhat arbitrary. For the final questionnaire, I asked the participants in the last question to write a couple paragraphs (this is what I supplemented in the Zoom meeting) describing the impact of the Hebrew Bible studies on

their spiritual formation. With the age make-up in mind, I chose five, whose answers to the last question were generally the longest. Since they wrote a lot for those two paragraphs, I thought they can just expand them a little more. As a result, one college student, one single person, two deacons and one pastoral staff were chosen.

Five Testimonies

Testimony 1[15]

> The Hebrew Bible Studies taught me a lot, starting from the Hebrew language itself. By learning the basics of the Hebrew language, I could then follow as P. Peter showed us the things we were missing when we read the Bible in English. One example would be the consecutive waw, and how that has the power to change the tense. P. Peter often linked this to Jesus, and how He has the power to change our past. He also pointed out how the consecutive waw is unique to Hebrew, which is surely not a coincidence. Hebrew really is God's language.
>
> But the Hebrew Bible Studies taught me more than just the technicalities of the Hebrew language; overall the main thing the Hebrew Bible studies have taught me is how much God really wants to get through to me. Learning Bible passages in Hebrew and all the hidden gems shows how much meaning and thought God put into each word and phrase in the Bible.
>
> The most memorable one for me was in Genesis 22:2, when God tells Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac, whom he loves, and how in Hebrew those phrases were actually all foreshadowing Jesus, how it was really God's heart emphasizing how much it cost for Jesus to die for me. It's almost as if one way wasn't enough; He wanted to pack two or more meanings into each line. That is God's heart for me. I have a relationship with this God, who has so much He wants to tell me. But I am blind to that so many times.
>
> When P. Peter was explaining the questionnaire, he stressed the difference between desire and habit, saying that we might have the desire to read the Bible but realize that the habit is just not there. As I was thinking about my desire and habit of reading the Bible especially, I was confused because I felt like my habit became more solid compared to earlier in the year, but I honestly did not have much desire to read the Bible. As I prayed and reflected about this, I also went back to my Hebrew Bible Study notes and was struck by the sheer amount of meaning P. Peter pulled from Bible passages. Even in the name "Job," there are possibly three meanings: "a professional enemy," "where is father?" and the cross of Jesus. We are currently doing devotion in Job and learning those three

[15] This person is 18 years old, single and a college freshman. This testimony is dated December 4, 2023.

meanings made me look at Job in a new light. He was going through harsh training to be a professional enemy of Satan, and he was a foreshadow of Jesus, who also went through such a harsh punishment for me. I realized how in Hebrew, the Bible is overflowing with references to Jesus like in Job and to God's heart like in Genesis. But through the Bible, God was also telling me how I should be, like how Naomi repented and was listening for God in Ruth Chapter 1, and like how I need to actually repent in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6). This made me repent, as God showed me how I was treating him. He was desperately trying to tell me all the things on His mind, but I read the Bible without wanting or looking for any of it. I read it because I had to. He was treating me like we are in a relationship, but I was treating Him like a to-do list.

Now, when I read the Bible and pray, I consciously remind myself that when I read the Bible, God is trying to talk to me. He has something He wants me to know for today, and I try to actively find it. This has renewed my desire and commitment to read the Bible every day. And when I pray, I am talking to my Father. There are no right or wrong things to say in front of Him. I just want to be a child talking with her Abba Father; that should be my attitude all the time.

In terms of witnessing, one thing that I learned about witnessing through learning Hebrew was that in Psalm 1:3, a person who is like a tree is someone who, in all that he does, makes others prosper. I had written this in my Bible after learning it in a Hebrew Bible Study but had forgotten about it until recently when I was meditating on Psalm 1 again, so I was surprised all over again about the actual meaning in Hebrew. I am not in the position to be preaching or teaching God's word yet since I am only a freshman in college, but one thing I can and need to do is to pray for others more. As I realize that everyone has a lot going on that I was not aware of before, I committed to pray harder for those around me on campus so that their hearts can be more open to the Gospel and so that I can bring them to Bible study. I want to be that kind of witness.

Testimony 2[16]

The Hebrew Bible studies have been very beneficial for my personal spiritual formation. In particular, the Bible studies have changed the way I approach the Word of God. Two of the most impactful Hebrew Bible studies this past year were the Bible studies on Psalm 23 and Psalm 119— these messages helped shape my own convictions about the Word of God. From Psalm 23 we learned that the Hebrew word for "restore" in Psalm 23:3 ("He restores my soul"), is factitive, causative resulting in stative, meaning that God restores my soul by causing me to be in a state of repentance. In other words, I can be restored by being in a constant posture and state of repentance. I need to repent every day. And only then can the old grooves of unrighteousness in my mind be replaced with new paths of righteousness. From Psalm 119, we learned many different Hebrew words that describe different aspects of the power of the word of God that soberly remind us that it is only through the power of the word of God that I can be truly changed and set free from the power and hook of my sin. The illustration on grass also really struck me, as we learned

[16] This person is 32 years old, single and a professional. The testimony is dated December 5, 2023.

that even though I try hard to remove the weeds and rocks of my heart, my heart will always return to the way it once was. Not until I plant something stronger to cover it, like grass—that is, the Word of God, can I experience true change and victory. I was personally convicted that I need to immerse my mind with the Word of God to stay on the broad path, to be free from the hook of sin, and to make those paths of righteousness in my own mind.

Around the time we heard these Hebrew Bible studies I experienced defeat in my struggle against my sin and old self, but the message I heard helped me come to the cross right away and be set free. In addition, I heard these messages soon after Dr. Rebekah Kim taught our church her End Times Bible study. I had been struggling a lot after hearing her Bible study, as I saw how much I did not love God and how I did not truly wait for Christ's return. I became all the more convicted that I need to devote my heart and mind to God's word to be that pure bride that waits for and longs for the true Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

One way I have changed my interaction with the Word of God is that I have been trying to wake up a little earlier to start off my day with the Word of God so that I might recall it throughout the day. I have also been trying to be more intentional about ending my day also in the Word of God and in prayer. Additionally, I have committed to memorizing the Word of God more, so that His word may be etched in my heart and hopefully be able to take over my mind like the grass. While I have not been able to carry out this commitment every single day, I still make it my goal, as it has really helped me fight the spiritual battle in my mind. Especially when I battle with my own thoughts, emotions, and doubts, I have found it quite helpful to have God's word at hand. God has helped me fight many of my own doubts quicker and quicker by teaching me to just trust and obey His word, and for this I am so thankful.

Having become a little bit more familiar with the Hebrew alphabet and some grammatical concepts, I have been able to study some verses/words using the Hebrew Interlinear. Though I have not done it much and still struggle to understand much, I have picked up a few personal gems. For instance, in Psalm 32 when it says "but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD," God showed me how His HESED, which already surrounds me, surrounds me even more and to greater depths, when I trust in Him.

I do believe that the Hebrew Bible studies helped me see myself a little more, and as such, it has given me a greater need to depend on God through prayer as I daily fight with my old self, my old patterns of thinking, my emotions, and as I fight against Satan's lies. I think that I have become more dependent on God throughout the day, and I have been asking God to change me from the core, to change my very character and heart. Naturally I began to witness a little bit more to the people God has placed around me, as I depend more on God and see that it is not about me. While it may not seem like a very significant change, I do believe that as I learn to die to myself more and as I learn to submit to the Spirit more (as we learned from the Bible study on Psalm 131), it is a step in the right direction in terms of spiritual formation. I know it will be a constant spiritual battle and that I still have a long way to go, but my prayer is that I become changed more and more

into Christ's character as I immerse myself more in His Living Word. I am thankful to have gleaned greater depths of God's personal love for me through the depths of His word through Hebrew so far. And I really hope and pray that ultimately, I may become less and He may become more in my life!

Testimony 3[17]

The Hebrew Bible studies including Hebrew alphabet, grammar, and word studies, have helped me to see the depth of God's word which I would not have seen otherwise, and I'm thankful that God reveals Himself through His word! This kind of illumination has inspired me and increased my desire to know His truth more so I can walk as a pilgrim and sojourner in this desert-like world. Hebrew has become the lens through which I can see the multi-faceted diamond of God's word more clearly as we studied in Psalm 119. Learning about the different Hebrew words used to describe the word of God translated to English as promise, word, rules, law, precepts, testimonies, commandments, and statutes showed how I took for granted the depth of God's word as I can easily gloss over the English translations as simply one thing. The different Hebrew words shed light on the truth to follow in this world, God's word and mishpat judgement, out of many lies and false lights.

Through the Hebrew studies, as we delved into the Levites, Rahab, Abraham, Joseph, Naomi and Ruth, and King David and the Psalms, I could see the depth of God's word and the power of His word. Learning the depth of God's command to Abraham to go and leave his homeland through the various interpretations of a preposition, or about God's steadfast mercy in the word *hesed* as experienced by Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz individually and as a "church", or even the interpretations of Job's name, were such a challenge and blessing for me to discover in deeper ways how God worked in people's lives through His word and obedience to that word, to transform those who walked in obedience, and His call for me to follow and be conformed in a similar way.

The Hebrew studies have helped move God's word from my head, to my heart, to my hands in different ways as it has given me greater desire and need for prayer through what I learned and to share as a witness. First, it has led to a greater desire to pray for myself, to pray in daily repentance for transformation by the renewal of my mind from wrong patterns or grooves like shallowness and self-centeredness, and to pray to humbly live out the truths I have learned as an Enosh with Adonai Roi as my Shepherd. Secondly, learning about Methusaleh's name and Enoch's faith to walk with God, not knowing what tomorrow holds and calling upon God urgently, has led me to more urgent prayer for unbelieving loved ones and those God has placed in my life to whom I should be a witness, and to intensively commit myself to walking with God's purpose with hope for my true homeland. Whether sharing God's word with others or testifying to Christ through my life decisions and actions, there is renewed urgency in me that we are living in the end times, each day should be lived to the utmost for His sake and purposes especially to save, and not to waste the time God has given me on this earth.

[17] This person is 50 years old, married and a professional. He is a deacon. The testimony is dated December 6, 2023.

As our church has been doing devotional through Job, I was having difficulty with reconciling the God-allowed suffering of righteous Job, but understanding the different interpretations of Job's name in Hebrew, such as to be trained as an enemy of Satan, even to the point of crying out where is the father, and his name's allusion to the crucifixion of Jesus, has really helped me to understand the book of Job more. The Hebrew study of Job and invitation to share in Christ's suffering cause me to recognize once again that this world is not my home and lead me to deny myself and share in cross-bearing, especially in the context of our church, so I may know Christ's resurrection life and be conformed to the *tselem* of Christ.

Testimony 4[18]

We studied the Hebrew alphabet and went through grammatical concepts like articles, prepositions, pronouns, learning about pronominal suffixes that are attached to other elements of speech. We looked also at verbs, their stems, and meaning associated with each stem, as well as how to understand the perfect and imperfect aspects of Hebrew verbs.

We also covered different parts of OT in Hebrew (Psalms, Genesis, Ruth), parsing through the sentences, and looking into the meanings we can learn from Hebrew that are often lost when reading the passage in English. For example, from Psalm 131, we learnt the Hebrew word גמל translated "weaned" in English, also has meaning of maturing, and of reward. The maturing aspect of it shows that David wanted to describe not only a picture of an older, weaned child resting with his mother, but with emphasis on weaning as a maturing process. The reward meaning associated with the word shows that this weaning process, as anxiety provoking as it may be, carries with it a promise of a reward at the end - experiencing a deeper relationship with the mother. As another example, we learnt the name Rahab רחב, if we added vav, we could see the Hebrew word *rûa(ḥ)*, which means the Spirit. The name Rahab can be understood then as "the work of the Holy Spirit in the house". What was the result of such work? A person whose faith, moved by the Holy Spirit, resulted in works that put everything she had and owned in the line for God, through a clear understanding of where her hope was so that she could belong God's people and not be doomed for destruction.

I think these two passages encouraged me to understand how my faith should lead me to action and that the work of the Holy Spirit in my house should be visible like Rahab's. In addition, these insights taught me that seeking to know and obey God, as a maturing process, can be anxiety-ridden like the weaning process, but that in the end, it carries the promise of reward. The passages speak about how I should live now, and how I should understand my life here as a weaning and maturing process. This helps me to grow deeper in my understanding and obedience to God and challenges me to wait for the final reward that will come.

Seeing the many layered meanings attached to the original text opened my eyes more to God's Sovereignty – that He had orchestrated everything from the beginning so that His plans could be achieved, and that His main plan was the coming of our Lord to redeem us. This is a truth I had known but seeing it through Hebrew allowed me to experience its reality in a new way, as many

[18] This person is 50 years old, married and a professional. He is a deacon. This person, however, is not the same person as in testimony 3. The testimony is dated December 6, 2023.

of these meanings cannot be captured in translation. This encouraged me to seek Him even more in prayer and through the Word of God. I had allowed the busyness of the cares of this world to crowd out my time with Him, but the lesson from Rahab encouraged me to act. I recommitted to guard my times of Bible reading and prayer. I had set these to be in the morning, but often would allow work meetings to push these around. I started being more intentional in guarding them and would often just say I am busy if a request for meeting came in. I also started being more consistent in a Bible reading plan I had started. Due to my inconsistency, I had allowed the reading plan to lapse for more than 60 days, but the lesson of maturing, of seeking to grow and waiting for God's reward (which would be God Himself) encouraged me to keep trying, despite the many failures along the journey. As I sought God more through His Word, He would reveal Himself through passages such as Isaiah 51:12, "I, I am he who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid of man who dies…" These words were very encouraging to hear.

Having a greater sense of trust in God's Sovereignty pointed me more toward Him when sharing the Gospel. I think in the past there would be times I would be sharing the Gospel for my own sake, to be seen by others or out of my own plan. That resulted in conversations that were driven by what I wanted to achieve. I realized that the desire to act on my own without prayer would often come out of an unbelief that the Lord will not respond. As I experienced God more through the Word, as I experienced more His Sovereignty, I learnt to pray to seek to know God's will more, trusting the Lord will guide before I act. I wish I could conclude by saying this year has been a steady increase in consistency, but the truth is more like experiencing victories and defeats, periods of sweet fellowship and periods of relapse, but having experienced how God does reveal Himself, the hunger to experience that again has been awakened, and the lesson of maturing and reward encourages me to continue to take action.

Testimony 5[19]

I am very grateful to God that I had the privilege to join the Hebrew bible study taught by Pastor Peter. During the Hebrew Bible studies, we learned not only the Hebrew language but also many spiritual lessons. One of the most exciting things that stuck with me was the fact that the forms of Hebrew verbs vary depending on the situation they are used in. I learned that Qal is by far the most common form of a verb. The verb stem can then be changed to Piel from the root by adding a few different vowels, which then becomes an intensive form to emphasize the action being described. To me, this clearly indicates that faith was not just simple head knowledge but an intensive act of obedience in Hebrew culture. As we were studying the faith of Abraham from Genesis 22, Pastor Peter reminded us that Abraham's faith did not become strong overnight. Rather, it grew stronger through his sequence of intensive actions of obedience to God's callings and commands over time because he also had to face up to his own sinfulness, which was not an easy task. In the end, he could obey God even to the point of sacrificing his only son Isaac on Mt. Moriah when God tested him intensively. Additionally, through P. Peter's insights, I realized that the word of God is like a precious diamond, and you can see its beauty from many different angles. This has made me commit to spending more time reading the Bible daily and intensively obeying God's commands, even when it is

[19] This person is 52 years old, married and a bi-vocational pastoral intern. The testimony is dated December 4, 2023.

difficult. I'm thankful that I have been able to follow through with my reading plan this year.

The Hebrew bible studies have also changed my prayer life. It constantly reminded me of the reality of who I am and the world around me, revealing the fierce spiritual battles that exist both around me and inside me. The word of God made me realize how weak and helpless I am, as well as others. This realization has pushed me to pray harder not only for myself but also for others. As a result, my personal prayer has gradually become deeper.

Another thing that impacted me is God's Love (*hesed*), shown in the book of Ruth. From the Hebrew bible study, Pastor Peter pointed out that many words that describe who God is in the book of Ruth were from the root word of Hesed. He also helped me understand that God's Hesed caused and demonstrated through Naomi's repentance, Ruth's clinging to Naomi, and Boaz's decision to marry Ruth. As our church came to Alaska, one of our primary goals was to reach out to Alaska Natives. However, during these many years, I could not develop a deep friendship with any Alaska Native students. When I thought about it, I got discouraged a lot. It seems that Alaskan Natives tend to live very separately from other people, perhaps due to their unique lifestyle or the trauma they have experienced in the past. However, after reflecting on the lessons from the Hebrew Bible study with Pastor Peter, I was reminded that I have been a recipient of God's Hesed from this family God for more than 25 years. I even had an opportunity to come to Alaska to reach out to Alaska Natives. Therefore, I decided to commit myself more to God so that I can have a deeper understanding of His Hesed through my own repentance. I hope and pray that my life can demonstrate God's Hesed to Alaskan Natives through my obedience in reaching out to them.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the project were given and analyzed. Through the questionnaires, quantitative results concerning the changes in desire and habits with regard to Word, Prayer and Witnessing (WPW) were described. Qualitative results were also given through the sample testimonies from five of the participants. All of these results have affirmed that teaching the Bible in Hebrew facilitated spiritual formation to a certain extent among the participants. In the next chapter, the conclusion of this thesis-project will be delineated with its caveats as well as some suggestions for further improving the results of this type of project.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

This thesis-project is predicated on the proposition that the Reformation tenet of the priesthood of all believers should be applied to the reading of the Bible in the original languages, an endeavor that is currently at best limited to those who went to seminary. By showing that learning the original languages is helpful in facilitating spiritual formation, the intent was to bring to light the truth that neglecting the original languages is tantamount to leaving out a valuable tool that is helpful in helping Christians grow spiritually.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Hebrew proficiency of the 22 participants improved from the aggregate average of 2.1 in the first questionnaire to 2.6 in the midpoint questionnaire and then to 2.8 in the final questionnaire. From the scale of 1 – 5, 2 indicates knowledge of the Hebrew alphabet and some knowledge of the Hebrew grammar, and 3 indicates being very familiar with grammar and some knowledge of the Hebrew verbal system. While there was not a great improvement in Hebrew proficiency during the course of this project, there was a significant improvement. The greater improvement from the first questionnaire to the midpoint questionnaire may probably be accounted for by the more frequent Hebrew language lessons that were given in the first half of the project.

The results of the midpoint questionnaire and the final questionnaire show that the Hebrew Bible studies that were conducted have given the participants a greater desire to read the word of God, and their habits of reading the word of God have also changed. The numbers for the midpoint questionnaire were 3.3 and 2.8 respectively. The numbers are 3.8 and 3.4, respectively, for the final questionnaire. In the 1 – 5 scale, 2 indicates “little”, 3 indicates

"moderately" and 4 indicates "quite a lot." Concerning prayer, the participants indicated that that their desire to pray was changed at 2.8, and their habits at 2.5 in the midpoint questionnaire, whereas in the final questionnaire, their numbers were 3.5 and 2.9 respectively. For witnessing, the participants said that their change in desire was 2.7, and their change in habits was 2.1 in the midpoint questionnaire. Their numbers were 3.4 and 3.0, respectively, in the final questionnaire. These numbers were aggregate averages among the 22 participants.

Individually, there were some noteworthy results. Regarding having a greater desire to read the word of God in the final questionnaire, 2 out of the 22 participants indicated 5, meaning that their desire has changed greatly. And 14 indicated 4 (including one person who said 4.5), meaning that their desire has changed quite a lot. No one was below 3 in the final questionnaire. For the change in habits, there were 2 who went from 1 to 3 (from "none" to "moderately") from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire. For those who answered fairly high (3 or higher) for the change in habits in the midpoint questionnaire, 10 out of 14 remained the same in the final questionnaire, confirming the ceiling effect as well as the inertia that is associated with changing one's habits in a short span of time.

For the change in prayer habits, what stands out for individual results is that 13 out of 22 remained the same from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire even though their individual numbers were mostly 2s and 3s in the midpoint questionnaire, implying perhaps that this is something other than the ceiling effect. In addition, as stated previously, the biggest aggregate jump from the midpoint questionnaire to the final questionnaire was change in habits for witnessing – from 2.1 to 3.0. Out of the 22 participants, 16 indicated a change of at least 1 from the midpoint to the final questionnaire, and 3 indicated a change of more than 1 from the midpoint to the final questionnaire.

All of the above results, both aggregate and individual, affirm to a certain extent that teaching the Bible in Hebrew facilitated spiritual formation among the 22 participants. While this project was more effective in helping the participants to have a greater desire to read the word of God and even with changing the habit of reading the word of God, it was less effective with regard to prayer and witnessing, especially with changing habits. Nonetheless, these quantative results show that the fifteen Hebrew Bible studies have facilitated at least a moderate change (the lowest was 2.9 for change in prayer habits) with regard to Word, Prayer and Witnessing (WPW), which was used as a measure of spiritual formation in this thesis-project.

In addition, the five sample testimonies at the end of Chapter 4 from a demographic cross-section of the 22 participants also affirm that spiritual formation took place as a result of this project. The qualitative results like these testimonies are able to give a fuller picture at times than the quantitative results. In Testimony 1, for example, the person struggles with the lack of desire to read the word of God. Quantitively, there might not have been a numerical progress in the questionnaires, but the person was able to experience a spiritual progress as a result of listening to the Hebrew Bible studies. In Testimony 2, the person talks about the fact that the Hebrew Bible studies have helped to shape this person's conviction about the word of God. This is something that cannot be described numerically. The person also talks about the timing of the Hebrew Bible studies and the spiritual struggles that had been happening – something that also cannot be described quantitively.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the key to the effectiveness of teaching Hebrew Bible studies hinged upon Rev. Sun Ki Kim's years of labor of love that resulted in his book *Mastering Hebrew in 3 Days.* By using Bible softwares and internet resources such as Interlinear Hebrew, thereby not forcing the participants to memorize (and then forget) the Hebrew vocabulary and

instead, helping the participants to focus on understanding the grammatical concepts, the participants were able to get over the formidable threshold of being familiar with the Hebrew language. The participants could then more readily engage with the Old Testament texts in Hebrew. In this chapter, I would like to discuss different caveats that accompany these results, and furthermore, I would like to recommend the ways by which spiritual formation may be facilitated even more effectively.

Spiritual Formation and Church

As I stated already, Frontier Baptist Church in Fairbanks, Alaska, is a mission church in our church network. All but five of the 22 participants are missionaries. One may say that the participants do not seem like a typical cross section of today's churches. On the one hand, I agree. But on the other hand, I am fairly certain that this thesis-project could have been done in any one of our fourteen churches in the network since only one out of the 22 participants were seminary educated. As I mentioned in the footnotes, this network of churches was founded by Pastor Paul Kim and his wife, Dr. Rebekah Kim, more than forty years ago. And for the past forty plus years, they have by the grace of God carefully cultivated the soil of these churches through discipleship training that is based on God-centered relationships or Koinonia Cross, which was explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis-project.

My point is that church plays an important role in spiritual formation. The Reformation tenet of priesthood of all believers perhaps came at a certain cost of ecclesiology since one of the forces that led to the Reformation was the corruption in the church. Nonetheless, the importance of church should not be underestimated because it is vital for spiritual formation. Bonhoeffer would wholeheartedly agree with this. According to his best friend Eberhard Bethge,

Bonhoeffer's intention in discipleship was not merely to recover the tenets of the Reformation. He wanted to go beyond the two ecclesial features of the Reformation, the word and sacrament, and add a third – namely, the earthly community. Bethge writes: "Yet, in contrast to the Reformational era, Bonhoeffer was entering new ground and an altered intellectual climate in his emphasis on the concreteness of faith, in his interpretation of earthly discipleship, and his location of the disciple within the boundaries of historical and local decisions, fraught as they were with visible inconsistencies."[1]It follows then that one of the factors that contributed to the plausibility of this thesis-project was the commitment and cohesion of the participants from Frontier Baptist Church.

Nonetheless, the reality is that today's churches have different levels of commitment and cohesion. I believe that this thesis-project will be helpful in today's churches at large in facilitating spiritual formation, especially for those who have a desire to go deeper into the word of God through the original languages. As I mentioned more than once already in this thesis-project, Rev. Kim has made it possible for people with no seminary background to be able to learn Hebrew and Greek. What is important is for the senior pastor and the pastoral staff of a given church, who do have seminary education, to see the treasure of what Rev. Kim has shown us through his years of labor. They can then recruit those who may be interested into a group of ten or twenty. This kind of project will then serve to facilitate spiritual formation for the participants. I believe that teaching the Bible in the original languages will serve to jump-start a congregation by starting with a group of people who are thirsty for the word of God, and by supplementing it with training in discipleship (I talk about this later in this chapter), they can raise a group of disciples who can, in turn, train others. This may take time, but I believe it is a

[1] Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 454.

worthy process to not only facilitate spiritual formation individually but also to change the commitment and cohesion of the congregation.

The Length and the Condition of the Thesis-Project

Although teaching the Old Testament in Hebrew facilitated spiritual formation among the participants, the results could have been better. There are two ways in which the results might have been improved. First, I would have preferred to conduct all fifteen Hebrew Bible studies in person. Unfortunately, because of my wife's health, I had to go to Korea on a medical leave unexpectedly. This was alluded to in Chapter 4. As a result, six Bible studies were done in person, six were done through Zoom live, and three were done through Zoom recordings. I am very grateful that all the participants (except for one who had to stop because of personal reasons) were faithful and even zealous in completing all fifteen Bible studies despite the circumstances. Nonetheless, I cannot help but to think perhaps it would have been more effective to go through this thesis-project in person from start to finish although not even one participant has said anything to me to that effect. I know that it is hard to measure what the loss might have been, but perhaps some of the relational dynamics may have been affected. As a preacher and a teacher of the Bible, I am often aware of the relational dynamics with the congregation. It is hard to express in concrete terms, but perhaps the results could have improved even slightly, especially with regard to prayer and witnessing, if all the Bible studies were conducted in person.

Secondly, I would like to see what the results might be if the duration of the thesis-project were lengthened. Even though it is a bit unrealistic for a thesis-project, doubling the duration (30 Hebrew Bible studies), for example, would allow the participants to improve their Hebrew proficiency and to give them more time to work on the transition from desire to habits. And

instead of having a midpoint and a final evaluation, there can be more evaluations along the way, which will help both the participants and me to navigate through this process. On the other hand, lengthening the duration calls for greater intensity and endurance for the participants, so it might also backfire in terms of effectiveness. Wisdom and discernment are, therefore, needed for future engagement with the original languages in terms of the duration.

In addition, the original plan of this thesis-project was to include teaching the Bible in Greek, but it was left out in order to simplify the thesis-project. One plausible project in the future then will be to teach the Bible in both Hebrew and Greek. It will be exciting to see the contribution that understanding the New Testament in Greek will make towards facilitating spiritual formation. I will want to apply the same principles that I learned from Rev. Sun Ki Kim regarding Hebrew to teaching Greek as well. Along with the book on the Hebrew language, he wrote a book titled *Mastering Greek in 3 Days*[2], applying the same principles. Incorporating another language, however, will be more involving for the participants, especially for those who have no previous knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, since they would be grappling with two languages instead of one, so wisdom and discernment will be needed in order to facilitate spiritual formation among the participants.

More Than the Original Languages

As discussed in Chapter 3, the role of the word of God in spiritual formation cannot be overstated. Dr. David Currie talks about "a primacy of the word of God in spiritual formation."[3]I believe that the place that this thesis-project occupies in the overall scheme of spiritual formation

[2] Sun Ki Kim, *Petra Mastering Greek in 3 Days* (Seoul: Do-Suh Petra, 2010).
[3] David A. Currie, "Shaped by the Word: *Sola Scriptura* for Spiritual Formation," in *Reformation Celebration*, ed. Gordon L. Isaac and Eckhard J. Schnabel (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2018), 51.

is to strengthen and to deepen that sense of primacy of the word of God in spiritual formation. This is attested by the five participants who gave testimonies at the end of Chapter 4. This notion is also supported by Dr. Rebekah Kim, who has been teaching Bible studies for the last couple years in our church network, at times using Hebrew and Greek, with the theme of "Going Back to the Basics." What she meant by this theme was to be rooted in the word of God because it is the very root of our spiritual formation.

Having laid down the place which this thesis-project occupies in spiritual formation, I would like to make a couple important conclusions from the results from the participants. First, although the progress that the participants made in terms of desire and habits regarding Word, Prayer and Witnessing (WPW) was significant, I believe that it is not enough. This is especially true regarding prayer and witnessing, as I alluded to at the beginning of this chapter. What is needed then is additional training in these two areas. As the title of Walter Henrichsen's book suggests, *Disciples Are Made Not Born.*[4] I believe that this is the role of discipleship training in spiritual formation, supplementing what was attempted in this thesis-project.

By God's sovereignty, our network of churches will go through discipleship training this year in order to bear more fruit as Jesus' disciples. Even though it was not planned that way, it is as though this thesis-project is somehow following the direction of our church. For the last two years, the emphasis was on "Going Back to the Basics" and being grounded in the word of God including some conferences on learning the Bible in the original languages. Having been fed well with the word of God, this year is the year of spiritual exercises in order to gain more muscles – namely, discipleship training. I am again reminded of the importance of church under godly leadership in spiritual formation.

[4] Walter Henrichsen, *Disciples Are Made Not Born* (Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 1995).

Discipleship training should include all three areas of WPW. It will be helpful to learn to pray from Biblical examples of prayer as well as by struggling together with others in learning to pray and establishing the spiritual discipline and habit of praying. What really helped me to pray was the example of two older sisters when I first became a Christian. I noticed that after Friday Night Bible study, they stayed at church sanctuary all night praying. I had never seen such a thing in my life. Their example challenged me to learn to pray as a young Christian.

Dr. Rebekah Kim recently told us that church should become a school of evangelism. It has been my experience that Christians in general, including the members of our church, do not witness nearly enough even though it is Jesus' commandment in Acts 1:8 as well as in many other places in the New Testament. Yet the Gospel and the love of God that we know are too precious not to share with those who live in darkness. Witnessing for a Christian should be something quite natural. After all, if someone were to have discovered a cure for cancer, would not he or she share the cure with cancer patients? But the fact of the matter is that because of many reasons – ultimately because of the sin of not loving God – Christians do not witness as much as they should. This is why discipleship and evangelism trainings are necessary to help Christians see the utter unnaturalness and sinfulness of keeping this priceless treasure within themselves instead of sharing with others. The practice of evangelism in tandem with dependence on the Holy Spirit will lead to the fruit of helping unbelievers come to know the saving knowledge of Jesus, with much joy before the angels of God as well as before the saints on this earth. Of course, evangelism can also be a frustrating experience because of the unbelief of those that we are trying to reach out to. This is also the reason that Christians need to be trained in evangelism. In addition, witnessing (even if it is not fruitful) helps us to appreciate

what we have received from God according to Philemon 1:6: "…and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.

The second conclusion that I want to make is that I believe that an inconsistent prayer life is perhaps is one of the most difficult barriers to overcome in spiritual formation because of our self-reliance, ego and pride. That was the concluding remark that I made in Chapter 4. After fifteen Hebrew Bible studies in the course of some seven months, the thing that lagged the most among the 22 participants was the habit of praying. By saying this, am I contradicting what I just said above regarding discipleship training that includes training in prayer? Let me explain. Just like anything else in our Christian life, it is important for us to be trained in prayer – to be taught, encouraged, challenged and exhorted in the footsteps of Jesus and people like Apostle Paul. But at the end of the day, prayer is something that is intensely personal. Jesus said in Matthew 6:6, "But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." And Jesus exemplified his life of prayer in no better place than in the Garden of Gethsemane. In His agony and sorrow before the cross, he prayed at the Garden of Gethsemane. He left behind even his closest disciples – Peter, John and James – and was alone with His Father. This is how Luke records this narrative in Luke 22:44: "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground." I believe that it was the agonizing prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane that enabled Jesus to obey the Father even to the point of death on the cross. This is affirmed by the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 5:7. He writes: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence." As His disciples, our prayer life too

should be an indication of the depth of our child-like dependence on Jesus regardless of the circumstances. Ultimately, as someone once said, the only way to learn to pray is by praying. May the Lord help each and every one of us by His grace and mercy to transform our prayer life a little more like that of Jesus!

Our child-like dependence on Jesus in prayer implies having an intimate fellowship with God. In Genesis 5:24, it says, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." Enoch must have been a man of child-like dependence on God – that is, a man of prayer. It certainly must have been difficult to walk with God for 300 years. There must have been much repentance, denying of one's desires and thoughts, much thanksgiving and adoration, much conversation about many things. Enoch must have been in love with God. In the process, he must have been transformed into the image of His Son to the point that God took him mysteriously. I believe this is spiritual formation.

In conclusion, let me summarize this thesis-project. The feasibility of facilitating spiritual formation by teaching the Bible in Hebrew is explored in Chapter 1. It also includes the discussion regarding the use of the grid of desire/habits and WPW to measure spiritual formation. In Chapter 2, theological and Biblical foundations are described, especially the value of being able to read the Bible in the original languages. Chapter 3 is a survey of relevant literature covering the value of knowing the original languages, the role of desire and habits and WPW. Chapter 4 gives five sample transcripts of the Hebrew Bible studies, the quantative results of the questionnaires and their analysis, as well as the five sample testimonies from the participants. This chapter is the conclusion of this thesis-project. To God be the Glory and Victory in Jesus!!!

APPENDIX A

Initial Questionnaire

Questionnaires for the D. Min Project

1. From the scale of 1 – 5, how would you rate your proficiency in Biblical Hebrew? (1 = not know the alphabet; 2 = know the alphabet and some grammar; 3 = very familiar with grammar including some knowledge of the verbal system; 4 = proficient in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary; 5 = able to sight read).

2. Do you currently have Bible software such as Accordance and Logos on your computer?

3. Please describe your engagement with the Scriptures. How important is the role of the Scriptures in your life currently, and how do you sense the Scriptures are shaping your spiritual life?

4. This D. Min. project is tentatively titled, "Facilitating the Spiritual Formation of a Team of Missionaries in Alaska through the Teaching of the Old Testament in Hebrew." What kind of expectation do you have as a result of participating in this thesis-project?

Name: Anonymous

Midpoint Questionnaire

D. Min. Project Mid Check-point

1. How would you rate your proficiency in Biblical Hebrew now? First, write down the number you wrote down before (1 = not know the alphabet; 2 = know the alphabet and some grammar; 3 = very familiar with grammar including some knowledge of the verbal system; 4 = proficient in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary; 5 = able to sight read), and now, please write down your current proficiency in Biblical Hebrew. For example, you can write something like 1 -> 2 if you think you have improved from 1 to 2. It's completely ok to say that you are at the same number.

(For the questions 2-4, please give a quantitative response to each of the two questions)

2. How has the Hebrew Bible helped you with your engagement with the word of God? (*You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to read the word of God? Has your habit of reading the word of God changed? (for the two questions in 2 – 4, please use the following 1-5 scale (1 = none; 2 = little; 3 = moderate; 4 = quite a lot; 5 = great)

3. How has the Hebrew Bible helped you with your engagement with prayer? (*You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to pray? Has your habit of praying changed?

4. How has the Hebrew Bible helped you with witnessing? *(You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to witness? Has your habit of witnessing changed?

5. Please write one comment related to your spiritual formation after having gone thru the Hebrew Bible studies so far.

By completing this anonymous questionnaire, you have given your consent you are a voluntary participant in this study.

Final Questionnaire

D. Min. Project Final Check-point

1. How would you rate your proficiency in Biblical Hebrew now? First, write down the number you wrote down in the beginning (1 = not know the alphabet; 2 = know the alphabet and some grammar; 3 = very familiar with grammar including some knowledge of the verbal system; 4 = proficient in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary; 5 = able to sight read), and second, please write down your current proficiency in Biblical Hebrew. For example, you can write something like 1 -> 2 if you think you have improved from 1 to 2. It's completely ok to say that you are at the same number.

(For the questions 2-4, please give a quantitative response to each of the two questions)

2. How have the Hebrew Bible studies helped you with your engagement with the word of God? (*You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to read the word of God (not necessarily in Hebrew)? Has your habit of reading the word of God changed? (for the two questions in 2 – 4, please use the following 1-5 scale (1 = none; 2 = little; 3 = moderate; 4 = quite a lot; 5 = great)

3. How have the Hebrew Bible studies helped you with your engagement with prayer? (*You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to pray? Has your habit of praying changed?

4. How have the Hebrew Bible studies helped you with witnessing? *(You don't have to respond to this question.)* More specifically, do you have a greater desire to witness? Has your habit of witnessing changed?

5. How have the Hebrew Bible studies helped you towards God-centered relationships? Please use the 1-5 scale above.

6. Please write one paragraph describing the impact that the Hebrew Bible studies had on your spiritual formation, being mindful of questions from 1 to 5 above. Based on your paragraph, some of you may be asked to write a short testimony.

   By completing this anonymous questionnaire, you have given your consent you are a voluntary participant in this study.

APPENDIX B

Hebrew Proficiency Results

Initial	Midpoint	Final
1	2	2
2	2	2
2	2	2
2	2.75	3
2	2	3
2	2	3
2	2	2
2	2	3
2	3	3
2.5	3	3
3	3	3
2	3	3
2	2	2
2	3	3
2	2.5	3
2	2	3
2	3	3
2	3	3
1	2	2
3	3	3
2	2.1	2.5
2	2	3
Total	44.5	53.55	59.5
Average:	2.1	2.6	2.8

(1 = not know the alphabet, 2 = know the alphabet and some grammar,
3 = very familiar with grammar incl some knowledge of the verbal system,
4 = proficient in all areas of grammar and familiar with vocabulary,
5 = able to sight read)

Midpoint Questionnaire Results

(23 participants)

Word of God – Change in Desire	Word of God – Change in Habits	Prayer – Change in Desire	Prayer – Change in Habits	Witnessing – Change in Desire	Witnessing – Change in Habits
4	2	3	3	4	3
2	2	2	3	2	2
3	3	3	2	2	2
2	1	2	1	3	1
3	4	3	3	2	2
4	3	4	3	4	3
4	3	3	2	2	1
4	3	3	2	2	1
3	3	x *	x	4	3
4	2	4	3	2	1
3	3	2	2	3	2
3	2	3	2	2	1
3	3	3	2	3	2
3	2	3	3	2	2
3	2	3	2	3	2
4	3	4	3	2	2
4	4	2	2	3	3
3	3	3	3	4	3
3	2	2	2	2	1
4	4	3	3	3	3
3	5	3	4	3	4
3	1	3	2	3	2
3	3	3	3	3	3
Avg. 3.3	2.8	2.9	2.5	2.7	2.1

(1 = none, 2 = little, 3 = moderate, 4 = quite a lot, 5 = great)
*This person did not put answers for Question 3 pertaining to prayer. I asked all the participants to put down what they put down in the midpoint questionnaire in the final questionnaire, which is the next chart. The midpoint average for the change in desire for prayer was different only by 0.1. This is also accounted for by the fact that there were 23 participants in the midpoint questionnaire, whereas in the final questionnaire, there were 22. All the other averages were the same.

Final Questionnaire Results

(22 participants)

Word of God – Change in Desire (Midpoint, Final)	Word of God – Change in Habits (Mpt, Final)	Prayer – Change in Desire (Mpt,Final)	Prayer – Change in Habits (Mpt, Final)	Witnessing – Change in Desire (Mpt, Final)	Witnessing – Change in Habits (Mpt, Final)	Helped Towards God-centered Relationships
2, 3	1, 3	2, 3	1, 2	3, 3	1, 2	3
3, 4	4, 4	3, 4	3, 4	2, 3	2, 3	4
4, 5	3, 4	3, 5	2, 4	2, 3	1, 2	5
4, 4.5	3, 4	4, 4.5	3, 3.5	3, 4	2, 3.5	4
3, 4	1, 3	3, 4	2, 3	3, 3	2, 3	3
3, 3	3, 3	2, 3	2, 2	3, 4	2, 3	3
4, 4	2, 3	4, 4	3, 3	2, 3	1, 2	2
3, 4	2, 3	2, 3	2, 3	2, 3	1, 2	3
3, 4	5, 5	3, 4	4, 4	3, 4	4, 4	3
4, 4	4, 4	3, 4	3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	4
4, 5	2, 3	3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	3, 4	5
4, 4	4, 4	2, 3	2, 2	3, 3	3, 3	3
3, 4	2, 3	2, 3	2, 2	2, 3	1, 3	3
4, 4	3, 4	4, 4	3, 4	2, 4	2, 4	3
3, 4	2, 3	3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	2, 3	2
3, 4	3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	4, 4	3, 3	3
3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	2, 3	2, 3	2, 3	3
3, 3	3, 3	3, 3	2, 2	3, 3	2, 2	2
3, 4	3, 4	3, 4	3, 4	3, 4	3, 4	4
3, 3	2, 3	3, 3	3, 3	2, 3	2, 3	3
3, 4	3, 3	2, 3	2, 2	3, 4	3, 3	3
3, 3	3, 3	2, 3	2, 2	3, 4	2, 3	3
Avg: 3.3, 3.8	2.8, 3.4	2.8, 3.5	2.5, 2.9	2.7, 3.4	2.1, 3.0	Avg: 3.5

(1 = none, 2 = little, 3 = moderate, 4 = quite a lot, 5 = great)

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